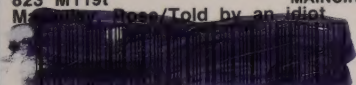


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TOLD BY AN IDIOT

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POTTERISM

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TOLD BY AN IDIOT

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TOLD BY AN IDIOT

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*Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing....*

Macbeth, Act V, Scene 5.

L'histoire, comme une idiote, mécaniquement se répète.

Paul Morand: "Fermé la nuit."

PART I. VICTORIAN

PART II. FIN-DE-SIÈCLE.

PART III. EDWARDIAN.

PART IV. GEORGIAN. First Period: Circus.
Second Period: Smash.
Third Period: Débris.

Generacioni Patrum.

PART I
VICTORIAN

TOLD BY AN IDIOT

A FAMILY AT HOME

ONE evening, shortly before Christmas, in the days when our forefathers, being young, possessed the earth—in brief, in the year 1879—Mrs. Garden came briskly into the drawing-room from Mr. Garden's study and said in her crisp, even voice to her six children, "Well, my dears, I have to tell you something. Poor papa has lost his faith again."

Poor papa had very often lost his faith during the fifty years of his life. Sometimes he became, from being an Anglican clergyman, a Unitarian minister, sometimes a Roman Catholic layman (he was, by nature, habit and heredity, a priest or minister of religion, but the Roman Catholic church makes trouble about wives and children), sometimes some strange kind of dissenter, sometimes a plain agnostic, who believed that there lived more faith in honest doubt than in half the creeds (and as to this he should know, for on quite half the creeds he was by now an expert). On his last return to Anglicanism, he had accepted a country living.

Victoria, the eldest of the six children, named less for the then regnant queen than for papa's temporary

victory over unbelief in the year of her birth, 1856, spoke sharply. She was twenty-three, and very pretty, and saw no reason why papa should be allowed so many more faiths and losses of faith in his career than the papas of others.

"*Really, mamma . . . it is too bad of papa.* I knew it was coming; I said so, didn't I, Maurice? His sermons have been so funny lately, and he's been reading Comte all day in his study instead of going out visiting, and getting all kinds of horrid pamphlets from the Rationalist Press Association, and poring over an article in the *Examiner* about 'A Clergyman's Doubts.' And I suppose St. Thomas' day has brought it to a head." (Victoria was High Church, so knew all about saints' days.) "And now we shall have to leave the vicarage, just when we've made friends with all sorts of nice people, with tennis courts and ballrooms. Papa *should* be more careful, and it *is* too bad."

Maurice, the second child (named for Frederick Denison), who was at Cambridge, and a firm rationalist, having fought and lost the battle of belief while a freshman, enquired, cynically but not undutifully, and with more patience than his sister, "What is he going to be this time?"

"An Ethicist," said Mrs. Garden, in her clear, non-committal voice. "We are joining the Ethical Society."

"Whatever's that?" Vicky crossly asked.

"It has no creeds but only conduct" . . . ("And I," Vicky interpolated, "have no conduct but only creeds") . . . "and a chapel in South Place, Finsbury Pavement, and a magazine which sometimes has a poem by Robert Browning. It published that one about a man who strangled a girl he was fond of with her own hair on a wet evening. I don't know why he thought

it specially suitable for the Ethical Society magazine.
... They meet for worship on Sundays."

"Worship of what, mamma?"

"Nobility of character, dear. They sing ethical hymns about it."

Vicky gave a little scream.

Mrs. Garden looked at Stanley, her third daughter (named less for the explorer than for the Dean, whom Mr. Garden had always greatly admired), and found, as she had expected, Stanley's solemn blue eyes burning on hers. Stanley was, in fancy, in the South Place Ethical Chapel already, singing the ethical hymns . . .

Fall, fall, ye ancient litanies and creeds!

Not prayers nor curses deep

The power can longer keep

That once ye kept by filling human needs.

Fall, fall, ye mighty temples to the ground!

Not in their sculptured rise

Is the real exercise

Of human nature's brightest power found.

'Tis in the lofty hope, the daily toil,

'Tis in the gifted line,

In each far thought divine,

That brings down heaven to light our common soil.

'Tis in the great, the lovely and the true,

'Tis in the generous thought

Of all that man has wrought

Of all that yet remains for man to do. . . .

Stanley had read this and other hymns in a little book her papa had.

"Then I suppose," said Rome, the second daughter, who knew of old that papa must always live near a place of worship dedicated to his creed of the moment, "then I suppose we are moving to Finsbury Pavement." Rome had been named less for the city than for the church, of which papa had been a member at the time of her birth, twenty years ago; and, after all, if Florence, why not Rome? Rome looked clever. She had a white, thin face, and vivid blue-green eyes like the sea beneath rocks; and she thought it very original of papa to believe so much and so often. Her own mind was sceptical.

Vicky's brow smoothed. Moving to London. There was something in that. Though of course it mustn't be Finsbury Pavement; she would see to that.

Irving, the youngest but one (named less for the actor than to commemorate the brief period when papa had been an Irvingite, and had believed in twelve living apostles who must all die and then would come the Last Day), said, "Golly, what a lark!" Irving was sixteen, and was all for a move, all for change of residence if not of creed. He was an opportunist and a realist, and made the best of the vagaries of circumstance. He was destined to do well in life. He was not, like Maurice, sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought, nor, like Vicky, caught in the mesh of each passing fashion, nor, like Stanley, an ardent hunter of the Idea, nor, like Rome, a critic. He was more like his younger sister (only he had more enterprise and initiative), Una, a very calm and jolly schoolgirl, named less for her who braved the dragon than for the One Person in whom papa had believed at the time of her birth (One Person not in the Trinitarian, but in the Unitarian sense).

"Three hundred a year less," remarked Rome, from the couch whereon she lay (for her back was often tired) and looked ironically at Vicky, to see how she liked the thought of that.

Vicky's smooth cheek flushed. She had forgotten about money.

"Oh, *really*. . . . Oh, I do think papa is too bad. Mamma, *must* he lose it just this winter—his faith, I mean? Can't he wait till next?"

Mamma's faint (was it also ironic, or merely patient?) movement of the eyebrows meant that it was too late; papa's faith was already lost.

"By next winter he may have found it again," Rome suggested.

"Well, even if so," said Vicky, "who's going to go on giving him livings every time? . . . Oh, yes, mamma, I know all the bishops love him, but there *is* a limit to the patience of bishops. . . . Does the Ethical Society have clergymen or anything?"

"I believe they have elders. Papa may become an elder."

"*That's* no use. Elders aren't paid. Don't you remember when he was a Quaker elder, when we were all little? I'm sure it's not a paid job. We shall be loathsomely poor again, and have to live without any fun or pretty things. And I daresay it's low class, too, like dissent, as it's got a chapel. Papa never bothers about that, of course. He'd follow General Booth into the Army, if he thought he had a call."

"I trust that I should, Vicky."

Papa had entered the room, and stood looking on them all, with his beautiful, distinguished, melancholy face (framed in small side whiskers), and his deep blue eyes like Stanley's. Vicky's ill-humour melted away,

because papa was so gentle and so beautiful **and so** kind. And, after all, London was London, even with only six hundred a year.

"Mamma has told you our news, I see," said papa, in his sweet, mellow voice. He looked and spoke like a papa out of Charlotte M. Yonge, though his conduct with regard to the Anglican church was so different.

"Yes, Aubrey, I've told them," said mamma.

"I hope you won't mind, papa," said Vicky, saucily, "if *I* go to church at St. Alban's, Holborn. *I'm* a ritualist, not an Ethicist."

"Indeed, Vicky, I should be very sorry if you did not all follow your own lights, wherever they lead you."

Papa's broad-mindedness amounted to a disease, Vicky sometimes thought. A queer kind of clergyman he was. What would Father Stanton and Father Mackonochie of St. Alban's think of him? Father Mackonochie, who was habitually flung into gaol because he would face east when told to face north—as important as all that, he felt it.

"Well, my darlings," papa went on in his nice voice, "I must apologise to you all for this—this disturbance of your lives and mine. I would have spared it you if I could. But I have been over and over the ground, and I see no other way compatible with intellectual honesty. Honesty must come first. . . . Your mother and I are agreed."

Of course; they always were. From Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism, from Catholicism to Quakerism, from Quakerism to Unitarianism, Positivism, Baptistism (yes, they had once sunk, to Vicky's shame, as low as that in the social scale, owing chiefly to the influence of Charles Spurgeon) and back to Anglicanism again—through everything mamma, silent, resigned and pos-

sibly ironic, had followed papa. And little Stanley had seen the idea behind all papa's religions and tumbled headlong after him, and Maurice had, grimly, decided that it was safer to abjure all creeds, and Rome had critically looked on, with her faint, amused smile and her single eyeglass, and Irving and Una had been led, heedless and incurious, to each of papa's places of worship in turn, but had understood none of them. They had not the religious temperament. Nor had Vicky, who attended her ritualistic churches from æsthetic fancy and a flair for being in the fashion, for seeing and hearing some new thing. *She* didn't care which way priests faced, though she did enjoy incense. Vicky was a gay soul, and preferred dances and lawn tennis and young men to religion. Stanley too was gay—as merry as a grig, papa called her—but she had a burning ardour of mind and temper that made the world for her a place of exciting experiments. She now thought it worthy and honourable to be poor, for she had been reading William Morris and Ruskin and socialist literature, as intelligent young women did in those days, and was all for handicrafts and the one-man job. She was eighteen, and had had her first term at Somerville College, Oxford, which had just been founded and had twelve members.

Irving, always practical, said, "When are we going to move? And where to?"

"In February," said mamma. "Probably we shall live in Bloomsbury. We have heard of a house there."

"Bloomsbury," said Vicky. "That's not so bad."

Sitting down at the piano, she began softly to play and sing. Papa sat by the fire, his thin hand on mamma's, his thoughtful face pale and uplifted, as if he had made the Great Sacrifice once more, as indeed

he had. Stanley sat on a cushion at his feet, and leant her dark head against his knee. She was a small, sturdy girl, and she wore a frock of blue, hand-embroidered cloth, plain and tight over the shoulders and breast, high-necked, with white ruching at the throat, and below the waist straighter than was the fashion, because Mr. Morris said that ripples and flounces wasted material and ruined line. Vicky, sinuous and green, rippled to the knees like running water. Irving sat on a Morris-chintz chair, reading "The Moonstone," Maurice on a Liberty cretonne sofa, reading a leader in yesterday's *Observer*.

"It is, unfortunately, impossible to conceal from ourselves that the condition of Ireland, never perceptibly improved by the announcement of the projected remedy for her distress and discontents, has for some weeks gone steadily from bad to worse. The state of things which exists there is, for all practical purposes, indistinguishable from civil war. The insurrectionary forces arrayed against law and order are not, indeed, drilled and disciplined bodies; but what they lack in this respect they make up for in numbers and in recklessness."

Such was the sad state of Ireland in December, 1879, as sometimes before, as sometimes since. Or, anyhow, such was its state according to the *Observer*, a paper with which Maurice seldom, and Stanley never, agreed. Stanley put her faith in Mr. Gladstone, and Maurice in no politicians, though he appreciated Dizzy as a personality. Papa had always voted Liberal and Gladstone, but thought that the latter lacked religious tolerance.

Maurice turned to another leader, which began "In these troubled times . . ." And certainly they *were*

troubled, as times very nearly always, perhaps quite always, are. The *Observer* told news of the Basuto war, the Russian danger in Afghanistan, Land League troubles, danger of war with Spain, trouble in Egypt, trouble in Bulgaria, trouble in Midlothian (where Mr. Gladstone was speaking against the government), trouble of all sorts, everywhere. What a world! Stanley, an assiduous student of it, sometimes almost gave it up in despair; but never quite, for she always thought of something one ought to do, or join, or help, which might avert shipwreck. Just now it was handicrafts, and the restoration of beauty to rich and poor.

2

MAMMA AND HER CHILDREN

Mamma, sitting with papa's hand in hers, watched them all, with her quiet grey eyes looking through pince-nez, and her slight smile. Pretty Vicky, singing "My Queen," with the lamplight shining on her mass of chestnut hair parted Rossetti-wise in the middle, her pink cheeks, her long white neck, her graceful, slim, flowing form, her æsthetic green dress (for Vicky was bitten with the æsthetic craze). Pretty Vicky. She loved gaiety and parties and comfort so much, it was a shame to cut down her dress allowance, as would be necessary. Perhaps Vicky would get engaged very soon, though, to one of her æsthetic or worldly young men. Vicky was not one of those sexless, intellectual girls, like Rome, with her indifference, or Stanley, with her funny talk of platonic friendships. To Vicky a young man *was* a young man, and no platonics about it. Sometimes mamma was afraid that Vicky, for all her

æstheticism, was a little *fast*; she would go out for long day expeditions alone with the young man of the moment, and laugh when her mother said, doubtfully, "Vicky, when *I* was young . . ."

"When *you* were young, mamma, dear," Vicky would say, caressing and mocking, "you were an early Victorian. Or even a Williamite. Papa, prunes, prisms! I'm a late Victorian, and we do what we like."

"A *mid*-Victorian, I hope, dear," mamma would loyally interpolate, but Vicky would fling back, "Oh, mamma, H.M. has reigned forty-two years now! You don't think she's going to reign for eighty-four! Late Victorian, that's what we are. *Fin-de-siècle*. Probably the world will end very soon, it's gone on so long, so let's have a good time while we can. We're only young once. I feel, mamma, at the very end of the road, and as if nothing mattered but to live and dance and play while we can, because the time's so short. Clergymen say it's a sign of the world coming to an end, all these wars and disturbances everywhere, and unbelief, and women and trains being so fast in their habits and young men so effeminate."

Thus Vicky, mocking and gay and absurd. Her mother's keen, near-sighted grey eyes strayed from her, round the pretty, lamplit room, which was partly Liberty and Morris, with its chintzes and wall-papers and cretonnes, and blue china plates over the door (that was the children), and partly mid-Victorian, with its chiffoniers and papier-maché and red plush chairs, and Dicksee's "Harmony" hanging over the piano. On the table lay the magazines—the *Nineteenth Century*, the *Cornhill*, the *Saturday Review*, the *Spectator*, and the *Examiner* with the article by Samuel Butler on "A Clergyman's Doubts." They had made the vicarage

so pretty; it would be hard to leave it for a dingy London house. It was a pity (though hardly surprising) that the Anglican church could find no place for Aubrey during the intervals when he could not say the creed. Aubrey was so modern. Mrs. Garden's own father, also a clergyman, believed in the Established Church and the Bible, and agreed with the writer of the Book of Genesis and Bishop Ussher, its commentator, that the world had been created in six days in the year 4004 B.C., and that Adam and Eve had been created shortly afterwards, full of virtue, and had fallen; and so on, through all the Bible books. . . . After all, the scriptures *were* written (and even marginally annotated) for our learning. . . . But Mrs. Garden's papa had begun being a clergyman when religion had been more settled, before Darwin and Huxley and Herbert Spencer had revolutionised science. You didn't expect an able modern Oxford man like Aubrey to be an Early Victorian clergyman.

Maurice on the Liberty sofa snorted suddenly over what he was reading, and mamma smiled at him. The dear, perverse, violent boy! He was always disagreeing with everyone. Mamma's eyes rested gently on her son's small, alert head, with its ruffled top locks of light, straight hair, like a cock canary's crest, its sharp, long chin and straight thin lips. Maurice was as mamma's brothers had been, in the fifties, only they had worn peg-top trousers and long fair whiskers that stood out like fans. Maurice wore glasses, and looked pale, as if he had read too much; not like young Irving, sprawling in an easy chair with "The Moonstone," beautiful and dark and pleased. Nor like Stanley, who, though she read and thought and often talked cleverly like a book, had high spirits and was full of fun. Little

Stanley, with her round, childish face above the white ruching, her big forehead and blunt little nose, and deep, ardent, grave blue eyes. What a child she was for enthusiasms and ideas and headlong plans! And her talk about platonic friendships and women's rights and social revolution and bringing beauty into common life. The New Girl. If Vicky was one kind of New Girl (which may be doubted), Stanley was another, even newer. . . . There shot into mamma's mind, not for the first time, a question—had girls always been new? She remembered in her own youth the older people talking about the New Girl, the New Woman. Were girls and women really always newer than boys and men, or was it only that people noticed it more, and said more about it? Elderly people wrote to the papers about it. "The Girl of the Period," in the *Saturday Review*—fast, painted, scanty of dress (where are our fair, demure English girls gone?) with veils less concealing than provocative . . . what, Mrs. Garden wondered, was a provocative veil? The New Young Woman. Bold, fast, blue-stockinged, self-indulgent, unchaperoned, advanced, undomesticated, reading and talking about things of which their mothers had never, before marriage, heard—in brief, NEW. (To know all that the mid-Victorians said about modern girls, and, indeed, about modern youths of both sexes, you have only to read certain novelists of the nineteen-twenties, who are saying the same things to-day about what they call the Young Generation.) Had Adam and Eve, Mrs. Garden wondered, commented thus on their daughters—or, more likely, on their daughters-in-law? (According to Mrs. Garden's papa, these had been the same young women, but in the late seventies one wasn't, fortunately, obliged to believe the worst

immoralities of the Old Testament.) "Youth," it was said at this period, as at other periods before and since, "youth, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, has broken with tradition. It is no longer willing to accept forms and formulæ only on account of their age." (At what stage in history youth ever did this, has never been explained.) "It has set out on a voyage of enquiry, and, finding some things which are doubtful and others which are insufficient, is searching for forms of experience more in harmony with the realities of life and knowledge." Those are the actual words of a writer of the nineteen-twenties, but they were used, in effect, also in the eighteen-seventies, and many other decades.

And had the young, both young men and young women, always believed that they alone could save the world, that the last generation, the elderly people, were no good, were, in fact, responsible for the unfortunate state in which the world had always up to now been, and that it was for the young to usher in the New Day? Well, no doubt they were right. The only hitch seemed to be that the young people always seemed to get elderly before they had had time to bring in the New Day, and then they were no good any more, and the next generation had to take on the job, and still the New Day coyly refused to be ushered in. Except that, of course, in a sense, each day was a new one. But not, alas, much of an improvement on the day before.

"These troubled times. . . ." Had there ever been, would there ever be, a day when the newspapers said "In these quiet and happy times"? Stanley, inspired by Mr. William Morris, was sure of it. The millennium was just round the corner, struggling in the womb of time, only it needed workers, workers, and again work-

ers, to deliver it safely. Some lecturer under whom Stanley had sat had put it like that, and she had repeated it to her mother. Well, of course in these days . . . the New Girl, being so new and so free, could use such metaphors. In the fifties you couldn't; unmarried girls couldn't, anyhow. Stanley had, indeed, coloured a little when she had said it. Stanley was not only unmarried, but declared that she never would be married, there was too much to be done (which was a way some young women were talking just then). She was going, after Oxford, to work in a settlement, and teach people weaving, dyeing and beauty, after learning them herself at the Morris workshops. It was all very nice, but mamma would rather Stanley had a husband and babies. (Mammas, it may be observed in passing, differ from other women in being very seldom new.)

Then mamma's eyes rested on her chubby, beautiful baby, Una, lolling on the hearthrug, one light brown pigtail over each shoulder, reading, with calm and lovely blue eyes, some dreadful rubbish in the *Boy's Own Paper*, her cheek bulged out with a lump of toffee. A nice, good, placid child of fifteen, who never thought, never read anything but tosh, talked in slang, and took life as it came, cheerful, unquestioning and serene. Una was the least clever and the best balanced of the Gardens. She was going, when she was older, to look rather like the Sistine Madonna.

How unlike her happy, handsome solidity was to Rome! Rome lay back on her couch, her face like a clear white cameo against deep blue cushions, the lamp-light shining on her fair, silky curls, cut short in one of the manners of the day. Rome's thin lips twisted easily into pain and laughter; her jade-green eyes mocked and watched. "I'm afraid of your sister. She

looks as if she was going to put us all into a book," people would sometimes say of her to the others. But Rome never wrote about anything or anyone; it was not worth while.

3

SISTERS IN THE GARDEN

Maurice threw down the second serial part of "Theophrastus Such," which had just come out.

"The woman's going all to pieces," he said, in his crisp, quick, disgusted voice. "Sermonising and tosh. . . . The fact is," said Maurice, "the fact is, the novel, anyhow in this country, has had its day. Except for the unpretending thrillers. We should give it a rest. The poets still have things to say and are saying them (though not so well as they used to; *their* palmy days are over, too), but not the novelists"

Vicky, to drown his discourse, began to sing loud and clear——

"When I was a *young* maid, a *young* maid, a *young* maid . . ."

"Of course she's old," went on Maurice, referring to Mary Ann Evans. "And she's been spoilt. She's not a teacher, she's a novelist. Or she was. Now she's dropped being a novelist and become merely a preacher. That's the end of her. I wish to God people would know their job and stick to it. She was a jolly *good* novelist. . . . Sorry, pater"—Mr. Garden had frowned at the expletive—"but I didn't think you'd mind—*now*. I suppose you and I are both agreed, aren't we, as to the non-existence of a Deity."

"All the same, my dear boy . . ."

All the same (this was Rome's thought), papa had

so recently believed in a Deity, and would, no doubt, so soon again believe in a Deity, that it seemed bad taste to fill the brief interim with vain oaths. Maurice had no reverence at all, and no taste. You would think, as Vicky turned from the piano to say, that, whatever he did or didn't believe himself, he might remember that some people were not only Christians but Church, and High Church at that. But Maurice only grinned at her. She tweaked his fair crest in passing and arranged her own glossy chestnut coiffure at the painted looking-glass over the chimney-piece. This Rossetti shape suited her, she thought, better than the high coils of last year.

The parlourmaid announced the curate, a good-looking, intelligent, cheerful young man whom they all liked. He had hardly shaken hands when Mr. Garden said to him, "I want a talk with you, Carter," and took him off to the study, to break it to him about the Ethical Society.

"Papa might just as well have told him here," Vicky petulantly said. "It would only have needed a sentence, and then we could have had a jolly evening."

"Of course papa feels he must go into it thoroughly with Mr. Carter," said mamma. "Poor Mr. Carter will be dreadfully hurt by it, I'm afraid. He has always been so fond of papa, and he has never himself seen any reason for doubt."

"There *is* no reason for doubt," muttered Vicky, beneath her breath. Then, louder, impatience conquering respect, "What does papa think the Church is for, except to tell us what we can't know for ourselves about what to believe?"

Mamma replied, taking up her embroidery, "Papa doesn't know what the Church is for. That is his great

difficulty. And, Vicky, it is not for us, who have studied so much less, to protest . . .”

“Well,” said Vicky, “I shall go into the garden. It’s a night for men and angels. Come on, Stan.”

Stanley came, and the sisters paced together, wrapped in shawls, down the gravel path beneath a deep blue sky full of frosty, twinkling stars and the pale glow which precedes winter moonrise. It was one of those frosty Christmases which our parents (they say) used to have in their youths. Hot summers and frosty winters—that is what they say they used to have: one is not obliged to believe them, but it is a picturesque thought.

“I’ll tell you what I’m going to do, Stannie. I shall get married.”

“Who to, Vicky?”

“Ah!” Vicky’s long eyes were mysterious in the starlight. “Perhaps I’ve not made up my mind yet; perhaps I have. All I do know is that I’m not going to live round about South Place, Finsbury Pavement, on £400 a year just because papa must needs go to an ethical chapel. I—shall—get—married. And well married, too. Why not? I can, you know, if I want to.”

“Captain Penrose,” said Stanley.

“*He’s* not the only one, my child. There are others. No, I shan’t tell you a word more now. You wait and see. And when I’m married you shall come and stay with me and meet lots and lots of men.”

Lots and lots of men. The kind of men who’d be friends with Vicky and Captain Penrose (or whoever else Mr. Vicky might prove to be).

“I shall be busy, you know,” said Stanley, doubtful and conceited. “I shall have very little spare time if I take up weaving and dyeing.”

"Don't take up weaving and dyeing. It's shockingly cranky anyway, all this Morris craze of yours."

"All the best things are thought cranky at first."

"Don't you believe it. The new princess dress isn't. . . . Now mind, I'm saying this for your good, my dear; men won't look at you if you go about with dyed hands and talk about manual labour and the one-man job and the return of beauty to the home."

"Vicky, you're *vulgar*. And as I don't mean to marry what does it matter if they look at me or not?"

"Oh, tell that to the marines. . . . I'm getting frozen. Come along in and we'll turn the curate's head, unless papa's still breaking his heart. . . . You're a little prig, Stan, that's your trouble, my child."

It was quite true. Stanley *was* a little prig. She not only read Ruskin and Morris and Karl Marx but quoted them. There came a day, later on, when she saw through Ruskin, but it is no use pretending that that day was yet. She was a prig and believed that it was up to such as she to reform the world. She saw herself (at the moment, for her vision of herself varied) as the modern woman, clever, emancipated, high-minded, too intellectually fastidious to take the vulgar view. She took herself seriously, in spite of the childish giggle at the comedy of life which broke like gurgling water through her earnestness.

"The first Nowell the angels did sing," sang Vicky, in her clear, fluting voice, and danced in at the drawing-room window.

4

MAMMA AND ROME

Mamma sat by Rome's side and embroidered, while papa interviewed his curate in the study. You could

see, now these two sat together, that they were alike, not so much in feature or colour as in some underlying, elusive essence of personality. But Rome's mocking, amused, critical self looked ironically out of her blue-green eyes and mamma's dwelt very still and deep within her.

"Well, mamma." Rome put down her book, which was by Anatole France.

"Well, Rome."

"You don't much mind this." Rome was commenting, not enquiring.

"Oh, no." Mamma was placid. "Not," she added, "that I *want* to live in London particularly. Dirty place. No gardens."

Rome said, definitely, "I prefer London," and mamma nodded. Rome was urbane. Negligent, foppish and cool, she liked to watch life at its games, be flicked by the edges of its flying skirts. And the game of life was more varied and entertaining in London than in the country and equally absurd. So Rome preferred London. It was like having a better seat at the play. Lack of bodily energy threw her back largely in the country on to the entertainment of her own rather cynical mind. She was often bored, sometimes ill-humoured, sharp and morose. The years might bring her a greater patience, but at twenty she was not patient. The very sharp clarity of her mind, that chafed against muddled thinking, stupidity, humbug and sentimentality, made intercourse difficult for her in the country, where Heaven has ordained that even fewer persons shall reside who are free from these things than is the case in large towns.

"How long," enquired Rome, negligently, slipping

round an old silver ring on her thin white finger, "do you give the Ethical Church, mamma?"

Mamma was feather-stitching, rapidly and correctly. The movement of her head indicated that she declined to prophesy.

"No point in looking ahead," she said practically. "One always sees a change a little while before it comes, in time to be prepared; and that's all we need. Papa is never sudden."

The whimsical smile that twitched at one corner of Rome's thin mouth was unreturned by mamma, whose face was gravely bent over her work. Mamma was a good wife and never joked with her children about papa's vagaries. No one had ever got behind mamma's guard in the matter of papa—if it was a guard. Who could see into mamma's mind, idly speculated Rome. Mamma had, by forty-five years of age, achieved a kind of delicate impenetrability. Papa, at fifty, was as limpid as the clear water of a running stream, where you may watch the fishes swimming to and fro, round and round.

Papa came back, alone and looking hurt. At the same moment Vicky came in at the long window, pink-cheeked, smelling of frost.

"Where's Mr. Carter, papa?"

"Gone away, Vicky. He—he couldn't stop."

"I suppose he was shocked to death. Oh, well. . . ."

But, of them all, only mamma knew *how* shocked the orthodox people of the seventies were about matters of unbelief. The children had been brought up in the wrong atmosphere really to know it. Mamma knew that to Mr. Carter papa's action would seem dreadful, blasphemous, very nearly wicked.

"After all," said Vicky, impatiently, "we're living in the year 1879. We're moderns after all."

Dashingly modern Vicky looked in her sinuous art-green dress, with her massed Rossetti hair and jade earrings. Daringly, brilliantly modern, and all agog for life. A dashing girl, as they called them in 1879—if a girl bitten with æstheticism can still dash, and it may be taken for granted that dashing girls will always dash, whatever bites them. Catching up slim young Irving from his chair, Vicky twirled him round the room in a waltz.

5

BLOOMSBURY AND SOUTH PLACE

In February the Gardens moved to Bloomsbury. Different people and more people came to the house; it was rather like the old days when papa had been a Unitarian. Mr. Stopford Brooke began coming to see papa again, and Dr. Martineau, and all his old and new friends who lived in London, even Father Stanton of St. Alban's, Holborn, and Mr. Charles Spurgeon. The circle of papa's friends had swollen and swollen with the years, from his undergraduate days onwards. Not only was papa lovable and popular, but he touched so many circles, fished in so many waters, and his fellow-fishermen of each particular water usually remained faithful to him even when he moved on to another pool. Good-humoured, witty Mr. Spurgeon, for instance, did not break with papa when he deserted the City Temple for a second go of Anglicanism, though he was sadly disappointed in him. Nor were papa's interests bound by religion; he had friends, distinguished and indistinguished, among politicians, journalists, poets, professors and social reformers, besides his relatives and mamma's. And now, of course, there was a quite fresh

influx from the South Place Ethical Chapel. So, one way and another, what with papa's friends and mamma's and the children's, a good deal of life flowed into the Bloomsbury Square house. Papa was, in his quiet way, happy now that the wrench was over. He was writing, and had for years been writing, a very long book on comparative religions, and for this he worked at the British Museum, which was so conveniently near. And on Sundays he went to South Place and worshipped ethically.

"Do not crouch to-day and worship,"

he would sing in his sweet tenor voice,

"The old past, whose life is fled;
Hush your voice to tender reverence,
Crowned he lies, but cold and dead.
For the present reigns our monarch,
With an added weight of hours;
Honour her, for she is mighty!
Honour her, for she is ours!"

(The author, Miss Adelaide Procter, had very rightly, it will be noted, dethroned a male and enthroned a female.)

So sang papa and mamma on a Sunday morning in April. Then someone rose and said a few ethical words about the desirability of not being fettered by religious dogma, and the congregation, who all thought this desirable too, listened attentively.

Papa gazed wistfully in front of him at the varnished seats and painted woodwork and the ethical texts inscribed round the walls. "Live for Others." "Live Nobly." "Duty First." He had made the great sacri-

fice, and once more dethroned the past for honesty's sake, and if it entailed a jarring of literary and artistic fastidiousness, who was he to rebel? God knew, he had been æsthetically happier joining in the Roman mass (tawdry and vulgar-looking as the churches where this service is held so often are) or chanting the Anglican liturgy in the little fourteenth-century church in Hampshire—though, as to that, some of the Hymns A. & M. were quite as bad as anything in the ethical hymn-book—but never had he been so utterly honest, so stripped to the bare bone of all complacency, humbug and self-deception as now. Or so, anyhow, he believed, but who shall read the human heart?

Again they sang:

“Hush the loud cannon’s roar,
The frantic warrior’s call!
Why should the earth be drenched in gore?
Are we not brothers all?”

For, sad to say, the earth was, in the spring of 1880, drenched (as usual) in gore. The gore of Afghans and British in Afghanistan, of Basutos in Basutoland, Chilians and Bolivians in South America, Liberals and Conservatives in Great Britain, where the elections were being fiercely contested, besides such permanently flowing gore as that of Jews in Russia and Christians in Turkey. The Ethical Society hoped pathetically that all these so unlikely persons would enjoy peace and brotherhood one day.

They trooped out into South Place. Grave, intelligent, ethical men and women clustered and hummed together like bees. They talked about the elections, which were going well, for nearly all the Ethical mem-

bers were Liberals and the Liberals were sweeping the country.

"Why are Ethical members Liberals?" Rome enquired in the note book to which she committed as much of her private commentary on life as ever found its way to paper. "Partly, no doubt, because of the liberal attitude towards religion, but it must be more than that. T.C." "T.C." meant "trace connection" and was a very frequent entry. Rome looked forward to a time when, by means of prolonged investigation, all the connections she had noted should be traced; that, she held, would add to her understanding of this strange, amusing life. What, for instance, was the connection between High Church dogma and ornate ritual, between belief in class distinctions and in the British Empire, between dissent and Little Englandism, art and unconventional morals, the *bourgeoisie* and respectability, socialism and queer clothes? All these pairs and many others were marked T.C. and had a little space under them, in which the connection, when traced, was explained in concise and lucid language. In another part of the book there were pages assigned to "Curious uses of words." Rome felt a great, perhaps a morbid, interest in investigating life and language. She wrote "Why are Ethical members Liberals?" when papa and mamma coming in from chapel told her how delighted South Place was with the elections. Papa, of course, had always been a Liberal through all his religious vicissitudes.

Vicky came in like a graceful whirlwind from Walworth, S.E., where she had attended church at St. Austin's, the monastery of Brother à Beckett, and flung herself into a chair in ecstasy.

"A service straight from heaven!" she cried. "Too utterly utter! *Such* incense—perfumes of Araby! And

Brother à Beckett preached about the authority of the State over the Church. It simply doesn't exist. The State is *nowhere* and not to be taken the slightest notice of. . . . And who do you think was there, just in front of us—Mr. Pater, and the adorable Oscar in a velveteen coat, looking like the prince of men and talking like the king of wits (yes, mamma, talking, but in quite an undertone). But too utter! I was devastated. I was with Charles. I'd made him come with me to try if grace would abound—but no, not yet; Charles remains without, with the dogs and the . . .”

“Vicky,” mamma interpolated.

“. . . and the sorcerers, mamma dear,” Vicky finished, innocently. “What did you *think* I was going to say?”

“You must allow Charles his conscience, Vicky,” said papa.

Charles was Vicky's half-affianced suitor, but unfortunately an agnostic, or rather a Gallio, and Vicky declared that they should not become regularly engaged until such time as Charles should embrace the Anglican, or some other equally to be respected, church. Unbelief might be fashionable, but Vicky didn't hold with it. Also, and worse, Charles was not yet in the æsthetic push; he was, instead, in the Foreign Office, and took no interest in the New Beauty. Velveteen coats he disliked, and art fabrics, and lilies, except in gardens, and languor except in offices, and vice except in the places appointed for it. And all these distastes would, as Vicky complained, make the parties they would give such a difficulty. Vicky told Charles that, unless he conquered them, she might feel compelled to become affianced instead to Mr. Ernest Waller, a young essayist who understood Beauty, though not, indeed, An-

glicanism, as he had been a pupil of Mr. Pater's in the days when Mr. Pater had been something of a pagan. But better burn incense before heathen gods, said Vicky, than burn none at all.

So, when papa said, "You must allow Charles his conscience," Vicky returned, firmly, "Dear papa, *no*. Conscience should be our servant, not our master. That's what Brother à Beckett said in his sermon this morning. Or, anyhow, something like it. Conscience is given us to be educated and trained up the way it should go. An unruly conscience is an endless nuisance. He that bridled not his own conscience . . ."

Papa, sensible of his own so inconveniently unbridled conscience, said, mildly, "I think Brother à Beckett was perhaps referring to the tongue," and Vicky lightly admitted that her memory might have got confused.

"But never mind sermons and the conscience, here's grandpapa," she said, and sure enough, there was grandpapa, who was staying with them on a visit. Grandpapa was the father of mamma and a Dean, and was a very handsome man of seventy-five, and he was one of the last ditchers in the matter of orthodoxy and had yielded no inch to science or the higher criticism, and believed in the verbal inspiration of the Bible and the divine credentials of the Anglican Establishment, and disliked popery, ritual, dissent and free thought with equal coldness. Papa he had never approved of; a weak, vacillating fellow, whose reputation was little affected by one disgraceful change more or less. It did not particularly signify that papa had joined the Ethical Church; nothing about papa particularly signified; a weak, wrong-headed, silly fellow, who would certainly, for all his scholarship, never be a Dean. It was far

more distressing that Anne (mamma), who ought to have made a firm stand and saved her husband from his folly, should thus abet him and follow him about from church to church. And the children had been deplorably brought up. Grandpapa, who thought it blasphemous not to believe in Noah and his ark, and even in the date assigned to these by Bishop Ussher, and had written to the *Times* protesting against the use in schools of the arithmetic book of Bishop Colenso on account of the modernist instruction imparted by this Bishop to the heathen in this matter of the date of the ark—grandpapa heard these unhappy children of his daughter's discussing the very bases of revealed truth; grandpapa, who held that our first parents lost paradise through disobedience, pride, inquisitiveness and false modesty, heard Maurice's perverse defiance of law and authority, Rome's calm contempt and conceited criticism of accepted standards, Stanley's incessant, eager, "Why, what for, and why not?" and Vicky's horror at the breadth and crudeness of the Prayer Book marriage service.

Grandpapa, being a Conservative and a Disraelian, was just now not well pleased. He did not think that the Gladstone Government would be able to deal adequately or rightly with the inheritance of foreign responsibilities left them by their predecessors. South Africa, Egypt, Afghanistan—what would the Liberals, many of them Little Englanders in fact though not yet in name, do with all this white man's burden, as the responsibilities of Empire were so soon, so horribly soon, to be called? Had grandpapa thought of it, he would certainly have called them that. His grandson, Maurice, called them, on the other hand, "all those

damned little Tory wars," a difference in nomenclature which indicated a real difference in political attitude.

Grandpapa entered with the *Observer*, which regretted as he did the way the elections had gone, and with the *Guardian*, which did not. He sat down and patted Vicky on the shoulder, and said that Canon Liddon had preached at St. Paul's, where he had attended morning service.

"A capital defence of the faith," said grandpapa. "Bones to it, and substance. None of your sentimental slop. You've all been running after ethics, or ritual, or this, that and the other, but I've had the pure Word. Liddon's too high, but he's sound. I remember in '55 . . ."

One of grandpapa's familiar stories, told as old people told their stories, with loving rounding of detail. Vicky's mind reached vainly back towards '55 and could not get there. Crinolines and sweeping whiskers, the pre-Raphaelites and the Crimea, Bible orthodoxy and the Tractarians, all the great Victorians. A dim, entrancing period, when papa and mamma were getting married and people were too old-fashioned to see life straight as it was. And to grandpapa '55 was quite lately, just the other day, and '80 was like an engine got loose from its train and dashing madly in advance, heading precipitately for a crash.

"I remember," said grandpapa, "I remember . . ."

Papa said, "That was the year King's College asked Maurice to retire because of 'Theological Essays.'"

What dull things elderly people remembered!

"Next Sunday," said Vicky, "I shall take Charles to South Place, papa. I hear Mr. Pater is preaching there. Too sweet and quaint; he preaches everywhere. And often the divine Oscar sits under him."

6

STANLEY AND ROME

Maurice and Stanley were back from Cambridge and Oxford for the Easter vacation, talking, talking, talking. Stanley, in a crimson stockinette jersey, tight like an eel's skin, and a tight little brown skirt caught in at the knees, her chubby face pink with excitement and health, talked of Oxford, of the river, of lectures, of Mr. Pater and of friendship. Friendship was like dancing flames to Stanley in this her first Oxford year; a radiant, painful apocalypse of joy.

"Are they so splendid?" Rome speculated of these glorious girls. "*Is anyone so splendid, ever?*"

She sat idly, her hands clasped behind her short silky curls, Mallock's "New Republic" open at her side. Stanley sat on the edge of a table and swung her legs. How romantic Stanley was! What were girls, what, indeed, were boys either, that such a halo should encircle their foolish heads?

There was proceeding at this time a now long-forgotten campaign called the Woman's Movement, and on to the gay, youthful fringe of this Stanley and her friends were catching. Women, long suppressed, were emerging; women were to be doctors, lawyers, human beings, everything; women were to have their share of the earth, their share of adventure, to flourish in all the arts, ride perched in hansom cabs, even on monstrous bicycles, find the North Pole. . . .

"Too energetic for me," Rome commented.

"Oh, but you'll be a great writer, perhaps."

"No. Why? There's nothing I want to write.

What's the use of writing? Too much of that already. . . . Oh, well, go on about Oxford, Stan. You don't convince me that it's anything but a very ordinary place full of quite ordinary people, but I rather like to hear you being absurd."

Rome's faint, delicately thin voice expressed acquiescent but not scornful irony. Stanley was a bore sometimes, but an intelligent bore. She went on about Oxford and Mr. Pater and some lectures on art by William Morris that she had been to. Stanley was drunk with beauty; she was plunging deep into the æsthetic movement on whose surface Vicky played.

"You know, Rome," she puckered her forehead over it, "more and more I feel that the *merely* æsthetic people are on the wrong tack. Beauty for ourselves can't be enough; it's got to be made possible for everyone. . . . That's where Vicky and her friends are off it. A lily in a blue vase all to yourself isn't enough. All this"—she looked round at the Liberty room, the peacock patterns, the willow pattern china, the oak settle—"all this—it's not fair we should be able to have it when everyone can't. It's greedy . . ."

"Everyone's greedy."

"No," said Stanley, and her eyes glowed, for she was thinking of her splendid friends. "*No*. Greediness is in everyone, but it can be conquered. Socialism is the way. . . . I wish you could meet Evelyn Peters. She's joined the Social Democratic Federation. . . . I want to ask her here to stay in June. She's not just an ordinary person, you know. She's splendid. She's six years older than me, and enormously cleverer, and she's read everything and met everyone. . . . I can't tell you how I feel about her."

Obvious, thought Rome, how Stanley felt with her

shining eyes and flushed cheeks, and shy, changing voice. In love; that was what Stanley was. Stanley was for ever in and out of love; she had been the same all through her school days. So had Vicky, but with Vicky it was men, and less romantic and earnest. Stanley was always flinging her whole being prostrate in adoring enthusiasm before someone or something, funny child. She was looking at Rome now in shy, gleaming hesitation, wondering if Rome were despising her, laughing at her, but not able to keep Evelyn Peters to herself. To say "Evelyn Peters is my friend" was an exquisite æsthetic joy and made their friendship a more real, achieved thing.

Rome felt a little uncomfortable behind her bland nonchalance; Stanley's emotions were so strong.

7

GRANDPAPA

When Maurice was there Stanley did not talk about her friends; such talk was not suitable for Maurice, whose own friendships were so different. Often in these days they talked politics. Maurice was a radical.

"Chamberlain's the man," he said, "Chamberlain and Dilke. Whiggery's played out; dead as mutton. Mild liberalism has had its day. Yes, pater, your day is over. The seventies have been the heyday of liberalism. I grant you it's done well—Education Act, Irish disestablishment, abolition of tests, and so on. Such obvious reforms, you see, that every sane person has *had* to be a Liberal. That's watered liberalism down. Now we've got to go further, and only the extremists

will stick on; the old gang will desert. Radicalism's the only thing for England now."

Maurice, pacing the room with his quick little steps, his hands in his pockets, his chin in the air, would talk thus in his crisp, rapid, asseverating voice, even to grandpapa, who had, when he had done the same thing as a schoolboy, ordered him out of the room for impertinence. Grandpapa and Maurice did not, in fact, each really like the other—obstinate age and opinionated youth. Because grandpapa was in the room, Maurice said, "They've returned old Bradlaugh for Northampton all right. Now we shall see some fun," and grandpapa said, "Don't mention that abominable blasphemer in my presence."

Papa said, gently, with his cultured tolerance, "A good deal, I fancy, has been attributed to Bradlaugh of which he has not been guilty."

"Are you denying," enquired grandpapa, "that the fellow is a miserable blaspheming atheist and a Malthusian?"

"An atheist," papa admitted, discreetly passing over the last charge, "no doubt he is. And very undesirably coarse and violent in his methods of controversy and propaganda. But I am not sure that the charge of blasphemy is a fair one, on the evidence we have."

"Any man," said grandpapa, sharply, "who denies his Maker blasphemes."

"In that case," said Maurice, moodily, "I blaspheme," and left the room.

Papa apologised for him.

"You must forgive the boy; he is still crude."

Grandpapa shut his firm mouth tightly, and Rome thought, "He is still cruder."

Vicky asked lightly, "What is a Malthusian, grand-

papa?" and grandpapa, who came of a coarse and outspoken generation, snapped, "A follower of Malthus."

"And who was Malthus, grandpapa?"

Grandpapa, catching his daughter's eye, and recollecting that it was the year 1880, not the coarse period of his own youth, hummed and cleared his throat and said, "A very ungentlemanly fellow, my dear."

And that was all about Malthus that young misses of 1880 needed to know. Or so their elders believed. But in 1880, as now, young misses often knew more than their parents and grandparents supposed. Rome and Stanley, better read in history than Vicky, could have enlightened both her and grandpapa on the theme of Malthus.

8

DISCUSSING RELIGION

It was a good thing that grandpapa's visit ended next day. Without him Maurice was better-mannered, less truculent. They could then discuss Radicalism, Bradlaugh, blasphemy, beauty, Malthus and the elections, *en famille*, without prejudice. They were, as a family, immense talkers, inordinate arguers. The only two who did not discuss life at large were Irving and Una; their conversation was and always would be of the lives they personally led, and those led by such animals as they kept. The lives led by others worried them not at all. They recked not of the Woman's Movement, but Irving amiably held Maurice's high bicycle while Stanley, divested of her tight skirt and clad in a pair of his knickerbockers, mounted it and pedalled round and round the quiet square. It was Irving who knew that

a lower kind of bicycle was on its way, had even been seen in embryo.

"But girls'll never ride it," he opined. "That's jolly certain."

"Girls will probably be wearing knickerbockers in a year or two," Stanley, always hopeful, asserted. "For exercise and games and things. Or else a new kind of skirt will come in, short and wide. Our clothes are absurd."

"Women's clothes always are," said Irving, content that this should be so.

Stanley would rush in, happy and bruised, assume again her absurd, caught-in-at-the-knees skirt, and argue desperately with Maurice about Christian socialism. Stanley was a Christian, ardent and practical; that was the effect Oxford was having on her. She privately wondered how papa, having known and loved Oxford, could bear the Ethical Church. But probably the Oxford Anglicanism of papa's day had not been so inspiring.

Vicky told Stanley that socialism, Christian or un-Christian, was very crude; religion was an affair of art and beauty, not of economics.

"Religion—oh, I don't know." Stanley wondered, frowning. "What *is* religion, Rome?"

Rome, looking up from Samuel Butler, merely said, "How should I know? You'd better ask papa. He should know; he's writing a book about it."

"No; I didn't mean comparative religions. I mean *religion*. . . ."

"A primitive insurance against disaster," Maurice defined it. He always looked up and took notice when religion was mentioned; to this family the word was like "rats" to a dog, owing, perhaps, to their many

clerical ancestors, perhaps to the fact that they were latish Victorians.

"But it *courts* disaster. . . ." Stanley was sure of that. "Look where it leads people. Into all sorts of hardships and dangers and sacrifices. Look at Christianity—in the Gospels, I mean."

"That's a perversion. Originally religion was merely a function of the self-preservative instinct. Offer sacrifices to the gods and save your crops. And even Christianity, after all, insures heavily against the flaws in this life by belief in another."

"What about the Ethical Church? They don't believe in another."

"A perversion too. A mere sop thrown to the religious instinct by people who don't like to starve it altogether. A morbid absurdity. A house without foundations. If they simply mean, as they appear to, that they think they ought to be good, why meet in South Place and sing about it?"

"Why," enquired Rome, who never did so, "meet anywhere and sing about anything?"

"Why," said Maurice, "indeed? A morbid instinct inherent in human nature. Mine, I am glad to say, is untainted by it; so is yours, Rome. Vicky has it badly, and Stanley, who gets everything in turns, has it on and off, but she is young and may get over it. . . . The queer thing about Stanley is that she's trying to run two quite incompatible things at the same time. Æsthetics and Christian Socialism—you might as well be a cricketer and a rowing man, or hang Dickens and Whistler together on your walls. The æsthètes may go slumming, in the absurd way Vicky does, but they've no use for socialism."

"I'm *not* an æsthète," Stanley cried, finding it out

suddenly. "I'm through with that. I'm going in with the socialists all the way. I shall join the Socialist Democratic Federation at once."

That was Stanley's headlong manner of entering into movements. She was a great and impetuous joiner.

But Rome, playing with her monocle on its dangling ribbon, looked at all movements with fastidious rejection. *Cui*, her faintly mocking regard would seem to enquire, *bono?*

9

DISCUSSING LIFE

1880 pursued its way. Mr. Gladstone formed his cabinet of sober peers and startling commoners, the new parliament met, the Radicals at once began to shock the Whigs with their unheard-of proposals for so-called reform, Lord Randolph Churchill and his Fourth Party mounted guard, brisk and pert, in the offing, Parnell and his thirty-five Irishmen scowled from another offing, demanding the three F's, and, for a special comic turn side-show, Mr. Bradlaugh, the unbeliever, was hustled in and out of the House, claiming to affirm, being ejected with violence, returning at a rush, ejected yet again, and so on and so forth, until gentlemanly unbelievers said, "A disgraceful business. Why can't the man behave like other agnostics, without all this fuss?" and gentlemanly Christians said, "Why can't the House let him alone?" and the dignified press said, "It is repugnant to public opinion that one who openly denies his God should be allowed in a House representative of a great Christian nation," for, believe it or not as you choose, that was the way the press still talked in the year 1880.

Maurice Garden and his friends at Cambridge greeted Mr. Bradlaugh's determined onslaughts with encouraging cheers. Maurice Garden enjoyed battle, and he rightly thought the cause of liberty of thought served by this tempestuous affair.

Freedom: that was at this time the obsession of Maurice Garden and his compeers. Freedom of thought, freedom of speech (though not, of course, of action), freedom of small nations (such as Armenia, Ireland, Poland and the Transvaal Boers), for that was a catchword among our forefathers of the nineteenth century; freedom even of large ones, such as India; freedom of women, that strange, thin cry raised so far only by sparse, sporadic groups, freedom of labour (whatever that may have meant, and Maurice Garden, a clear-thinking young man, could have told you precisely and at length what he meant by it), freedom even of Russians, that last word in improbabilities.

"Freedom?" queried Rome. "A word that wants defining," and that was all she had to say of it. While Maurice and Stanley went, hot heads down, for the kernel, she was for ever meticulously, aloofly, fingering the shell, reducing it to absurdity. That seemed, at times, to be all that Rome cared about, all she had the humanity, the vital energy, to seek. Stanley, rushing buoyantly through Oxford, seizing upon this new idea and that, eagerly mapping out her future, ardently burning her present candle at both ends, intellectually, socially and athletically (so far as young women were allowed to be athletic in those days, when hockey and bicycling had not come in and lawn tennis consisted in lobbing a ball gently over a net with a racket weighing seventeen pounds and shaped like a crooked spoon)—Stanley seemed to Rome, whom God had saved from

too much love of living, amusingly violent and crude.

They were oddly different, these four sisters; Vicky so spritely, Rome so cool, Stanley so eager, Una so placid.

"Your languid indifference is tip-top form, my dear," Vicky would say to Rome. "You're *fin-de-siècle*—that's utterly the last word to-day. But I can't emulate you."

"Don't you want to *do* anything, Rome?" Stanley, home for the long vacation, asked, and Rome's eyebrows went up.

"Do anything? *Jamais de ma vie*. What should I do?"

"Well, anything. Any of the things women do. Teaching. Settlement work. Doctoring. Writing. Painting. Anything."

"What a list! What frightful labours! I do not."

"But aren't you bored?"

"In moderation. I survive. I even amuse myself."

"I think, you know, that women *ought* to do things, just as much as men."

"And just as little. What's worth doing, after all?"

"Things *need* doing. The world is so shocking. . . . All this time women have been suppressed and kept under and not allowed to help in putting things right, and now they're just getting free . . ."

"There's one thing about freedom" (a word upon which Rome had of late been speculating); "each generation of people begins by thinking they've got it for the first time in history, and ends by being sure the generation younger than themselves have too much of it. It can't really always have been increasing at the rate people suppose, or there would be more of it by now."

"It's only lately begun, for women. What was there for mamma to do, when *she* was young? Nothing. Only to marry papa. But now . . ."

"What is there for Vicky to do, now *she's* young? Nothing. Only to marry Charles—or another."

"Oh, well, Vicky slums. And she could do any of the other things if she liked. . . . Anyhow, Rome, you're not supporting *marriage* as the only woman's job worth doing!"

"No. Not even marriage. Perhaps, in fact, marriage less than most things. I only said it is, so far as one can infer, Vicky's job. . . . The only job worth doing in this curious fantasia of a world, as I see it, is to amuse oneself as well as may be and to get through it with no more trouble than need be. What else is there?"

With all the desperate needs of the certainly curious but as certainly necessitous world crying in her ears, with vistas of adventure and achievement stretching illimitably before her eyes, Stanley found this too immense a question. She could only answer it with another. "Why do you think we were born, then?" and Rome's matter of fact "Obviously because papa and mamma got married" sent her sulkily away to play cricket on the lawn with Irving and Una. Apathy, languor, selfishness, did very greatly anger her. She was the more troubled in that she knew Rome to be clever—cleverer than herself. Rome could have done anything, and elected to do nothing. Rome would probably not even marry; her caustic tongue and cool indifference kept those who admired her at arm's length; she made them feel that any expression of regard was an error in taste; she shrivelled it up by an

amused, enquiring look through the deadly monocle she placed in one blue-green eye for the purpose.

IO

VICKY GETS MARRIED

Vicky, on the contrary, became, during this summer, definitely affianced to Charles, whom she decided to marry next spring. She had not, as yet, made of Charles either an æsthete or a ritualist, but these things, she hoped, would come after marriage, and anyhow Charles was intelligent, his career promised well, he had sufficient income, and, in fine, she loved him.

"The main thing, after all, Vicky," papa inevitably said.

"No, papa; the *main* thing is that the American merchant princesses are descending on the land like locusts, and that if I don't secure Charles they will, even though he hasn't a title—yet. He's so obviously a distinguished person in embryo. American merchant princesses have brains."

Vicky, having surrendered, put on a new tenderness, even an occasional gravity. It was as if you could catch glimpses here and there of the gay wife and mother that was to supersede the flighty girl. Beneath her chaff and bickerings with her Charles, her love swelled into that stream so necessary to carry her through the long and arduous business. She did her shopping for her new life with gusto and taste, tempering Morris picturesqueness with Chippendale elegance, chasing Queen Anne with unflagging energy from auction to auction and from one Israelitish shop

to another, tinkling the while with snakish bangles, swinging golden swine from her ears, as was the barbarous and yet graceful custom of our ancestresses in that year.

II

MAURICE STARTS LIFE

Maurice left Cambridge, armed with a distinguished first in his classical tripos.

"And now what?" enquired papa, indulgently.

"Wilbur has offered me a job on the *New View*. That will do me, for a bit."

The *New View* was a weekly paper of the early eighties, started to defeat Whiggery by the spread of Radicalism. Its gods were Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, its objects to introduce a more democratic taxation, to reform the suffrage, to free Ireland, to curtail Empire, and so forth. As its will was strong, it suffered but it did not suffer long, and is, in fact, now forgotten but by the seekers among the pathetic chronicles of wasted years. All the same, it was, in its brief day, not unfruitful of good; it was deeply, if not widely, respected, and many of our more intelligent forbears wrote for it for a space, particularly that generation which left the Universities round about the year 1880. It was hoped by some of them (including Maurice Garden), that it would make a good jumping off ground for a political career. As it turned out, the first thing into which Maurice jumped off from it was love. At dinner at the Wilburs' he met Amy Wilbur, the young daughter of his editor. She was small and ivory-coloured, with long dark eyes under slanting brows, a large, round, shallow dimple

in each smooth cheek, a small tilting red mouth (red even in those days, when lip salve was not used except in the half world), a smooth, childlike voice and a laugh like silver bells. Maurice thought her like a geisha out of the new opera, "The Mikado," and was enchanted with her lovely gaiety. Such is love and its blindness that Maurice, who detested both silliness and petty malice in male or female, did not see that his Amy was silly and malicious. He saw nothing but her enchanting exterior and on that and his small salary he got married in haste. None of the Gardens except himself and papa much cared about Amy and papa liked nearly everyone, and certainly nearly all pretty girls. As to mamma's feelings towards her daughter-in-law, who could divine them?

Vicky said to Rome: "They are both making a horrific mistake. Maurice is a prickly person, who won't suffer fools. In a year he'll be wanting to beat her. She hasn't the wits or the personality to be the least help to him in his career, either. When he's a rising politician and she ought to be holding salons, she won't be able to. Her salons will be mere At Homes."

"When," Rome speculated, "does an At Home become a salon? I've often wondered."

They decided that it was a salon when several distinguished people came to it, rather from habit than from accident. Also the conversation must be reasonably intelligent (or, anyhow, the conversers must believe that it was so, for that is all that can be hoped of any conversation). And people must come, or pretend that they came, mainly for the talk and not so much for any food there might be, or to show their new clothes.

"Asses they must be," said Una, who was listening. "I shan't go to salons ever."

"No one will ask you, my child. Anything *you'll* find yourself at will be a common party, with food and drink and foolish chit-chat."

"Like *your* parties," Una agreed, amiably content. No teasing worried Una; she was as placid as a young cow.

12

EIGHTIES

So, with Vicky and Maurice happily wedded (*settled*, as they wittily called it in those days, though indeed they knew as well as we do that marriage is likely to be as inconclusive and unsettling an affair as any other and somewhat more than most), and papa and mamma happily, if impermanently, ethicised, and the three younger children still pursuing, or being pursued by, education and Rome perfunctorily, amusedly and inactively surveying the foolish world, the Garden family entered on that eager, clever, civilised, earnest decade, the eighteen eighties. Earnest indeed it was, for people still took politics seriously, and creeds, and literature, and life. Over the period still brooded the mighty ones, those who are usually called the Giants (literary and scientific) of the Victorian era, for the nineteenth century was an age of giant-makers, of hero-worshippers.

The eighties were also a great time for women. What was called *emancipation* then occurred to them. Young ladies were getting education and it went to their heads. No creature was ever more solemn, more earnest, more full of good intentions for the world,

than the university-educated young female of the eighties. We shall not look upon her like again; she has gone, to make place for her lighter-minded daughters, surely a lesser generation, without enthusiasm, ardour or aspiration.

It was these ardent good intentions, this burning social conscience, as well as the desire to do the emancipated thing, that drove Stanley, leaving Oxford in 1882, to take up settlement work in Poplar. So Poplarised, so orientalised, did she become, that she took to speaking of her parental home in Bloomsbury as being in the West End. To her everything west of St. Paul's became the West End. The West End, its locality and its limits, is indeed a debatable land. Where you think it is seems to depend on where you live or work. To those who work in Fleet Street, as do so many journalists, it seems that anything west of the Strand is the West End. "West End cocaine orgy," you see on newspaper placards and find that the orgy occurred in Piccadilly or Soho. Mayfair and its environments are also spoken of by these scribblers of the East as the West End. But to those who live in Mayfair, the West End begins at about Edgware Road and Mayfair seems about the middle, and to the denizens of Edgware Road the West End is Bayswater, Kensington or Shepherd's Bush. The dwellers in these outlying lands of the sunset do really acknowledge that they are the West End; and to them Mayfair and Piccadilly are not even the middle, but the east. A strange, irrational phrase, which bears so fluctuating and dubious a meaning. But then nearly all phrases are strange and irrational, like most of those who use them.

Anyhow, and be that as it may, Stanley went and

worked in Poplar to ameliorate the lot of the extremely poor, who lived there then as now. She took up with Fabians, and admired greatly Mr. Bernard Shaw, while cleaving still to William Morris. She was concerned about Sweated Women, and served on Women's Labour Committees. Her good working intelligence caused people to give her charges and responsibilities beyond her years. She was now a sturdy, capable, square-set, brown-faced young woman, attractive, with her thrust-out under-lip and chin, and her beautiful blue eyes under heavy black brows. She spoke well on platforms in a deep, girlish voice, was as strong as a pony and could work from morning till night without flagging. There was something candid and lovable about Stanley. A doctor and a clergyman asked her in wedlock, but she did not much care about them and was too busy and interested to think about marriage.

She had, among other strong and ardent beliefs, belief in God. She had religion, inherited perhaps from her papa, but taking in her a more concentrated and less diffused form. To her the Christian church was a militant church, the sword of God come to do battle for the poor and oppressed. To her a church was an enchanted house, glorious as a child's dream, the mass as amazing as a fairy story and as true as sunrise. She did not much mind at which churches she attended this miracle, but on the whole preferred those of the Anglican establishment to the Roman variety, finding these latter rather more lacking in beauty than churches need be. Stanley was an optimist. She looked on the shocking, wicked and ill-constructed universe, and felt that there must certainly be something behind this odd business. There must, she reasoned, be divine spirit and fire somewhere, to account for such flashes

of good as were so frequently evident in it. Something gallant, unquenchable, imperishably ardent and brave, must burn at its shoddy heart.

Vicky complained that Stanley thought of God ("in whom, of course," said Vicky, "we all believe"), as a socialist agitator, and Stanley perhaps did. Certainly God, she believed, was fighting sweated industries.

"With signally small success," Maurice said, for the commission on these industries had just concluded.

"God very seldom succeeds," Stanley agreed. "He has very nearly everything against Him, of course."

She seldom mentioned God, being, for the most part, as shyly inarticulate as a schoolgirl on this theme so vital to her. But of unemployment, labour troubles, and sweated industries, she and Maurice would talk by the hour. She wrote articles for his paper on the conditions of working women in Poplar. She attended street labour meetings in the east, while Maurice did the same in Trafalgar Square and Hyde Park.

In 1882, the year that Stanley left Oxford, Una left school. It was no use sending her to college, for she had not learning, nor the inclination to acquire it. She had done with lessons.

"You don't want just to slack about for ever, I suppose?" Stanley put it to her, sternly.

"For ever . . ." Una looked at her with wide, sleepy blue eyes, trying and failing to think of eternity. Una lived in to-day, not in yesterday or to-morrow. She was rather like a puppy.

"I don't much care," she said at length. "I mean, I've never thought about it. I'm never bored, anyhow. There's theatres, and badminton and dancing, and all the shops, and taking the dogs in the parks. . . . Of course I'd like better to live in the country again.

But London's all right. *I'm* all right. I'm not booky like you, you see."

Stanley said it had nothing to do with being booky; there were things that wanted doing. Doubtless there were. But she failed to rouse Una to any thought of doing them. Una stayed at home, and went to parties, and theatres, and played games, and occasionally rode, and walked the dogs in the parks, and stayed with friends in the country, and enjoyed life.

"I suppose she'll just marry," Stanley disappointedly said, for in the eighteen eighties marriage was not well thought of, though freely practised, by young feminine highbrows.

As to Irving, another cheery hedonist, he was enjoying himself very much at Cambridge and reading for a pass.

13

PARENTS

The eighteen eighties were freely strewn with, among other things, Vicky's children. The halcyon period for children had not yet set in; did not, in fact, set in until well on in the twentieth century. In the eighteen eighties and nineties children were still thwarted, still disciplined, still suppressed, though with an abatement of mid-Victorian savagery. The idea had not yet started that they were interesting little creatures who should be permitted, even encouraged, to lift their voices in public and interrupt the conversation of their elders. On the whole, the bringing up of children (at best a poor business) was perhaps less badly done during the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century than before or since. It may safely be said that it is

always pretty badly done, since most parents and all children are very stupid and uncivilised, and anyhow to "bring up" (queer phrase!) the unfortunate raw material that human nature is, to bring it up to any semblance of virtue or intelligence (the parents, probably, having but small acquaintance with either), is a gargantuan task, almost beyond human powers. Some children do, indeed, grow up as well as can, in the circumstances, be expected, but this is, as a rule, in spite of, rather than on account of, the misguided efforts of their parents. And most children do not grow up well at all, but quite otherwise, which is why the world is as we see it.

Vicky was, as parents go, not a bad one. She loved her children, but did not unduly spoil them or turn their heads with injudicious attentions. Year by year her nursery filled with nice, pretty little Du Maurier boys, fine, promising little Du Maurier girls, in sailor suits, jerseys, tam-o'-shanters, and little frocks sashed about the knees, and year by year Vicky was to be found again in what newspaper reporters, in their mystic jargon, call, for reasons understood by none but themselves, "a certain condition." "The woman," they will write, "said she was in a certain condition." As if everyone, all the time, was not in a certain condition. Whether these journalists think the statement "she was going to have a baby" indecent, or coarse, will probably never transpire, for they are a strange, instinct-driven, non-analytical race, who can seldom give reasons for their terminology. Who shall see into their hearts? Perhaps they really do think that the human race should not be mentioned until it is visible to the human eye.

Anyhow Vicky, of a franker breed than these, said

year by year, with resignation, "*Again*, my dears, I replenish the earth," and added sometimes, in petulant enquiry, "How long, O Lord, how long?"

But Amy, the wife of Maurice, had, like newspaper men, her pruderies. Of her coming infants she preferred to speak gently, in fretful undertones. When she told Maurice about the first, she did not, like Vicky, sing out, on his return from the office, "What *do* you think? There's a baby on the way!" but, drawing her inspiration from fiction, she hid her face against his coat and murmured, "Oh, *Maurice!* Guess."

Maurice said, "Guess what? How do you mean, guess, darling?" to which she replied, "Well, I do think you're slow to-night. . . . Oh, Maurice . . ."

And then Maurice, instead of saying, like the young husbands in the fiction she was used to, "Darling, you *can't* mean . . . What angels women are!" said instead, "Oh, I say, do you mean we've got a baby coming? Good business."

A baby. What a coarse, downright word for the little creature. Later, of course, one got used to it, but just at first, at the very, very outset, the dimmest dawn of its tiny being, it was scarcely a baby. And what about her being an angel? Obviously Maurice did not know the rules of this game.

When the baby, and the subsequent baby (there were only two altogether), arrived, Amy spoiled them. She was a depraved mother. Also she was unjust. She was, of course, the type of mother whose strong sex instinct leads her to prefer boys to girls, and she took no pains to hide this. Maurice said, stubbornly, "The girl shall have as good a chance as the boy, and as good an education. We'll make no difference," but Amy said, "Chance! Fiddlesticks! What chances

does a girl want, except to marry well? What does a girl want with education? I'm not going to have her turned into a blue-stockings. Girls can't have real brains, anyhow. They can't *do* anything—only sit about and look superior.”

This referred to Rome, and these were the remarks that fell like nagging drops of water on Maurice's sensitive, irritable nerves and mind, slowly teasing love out of existence, and beating into him (less slowly) that he had married a fool.

Maurice found outlet from domestic irritation in political excitement. There was, for instance, the Home Rule Bill. It seemed to Maurice, as to many others, immeasurably important that this bill should go through. Its failure to do so, his own failure to be elected in the elections of 1886, and the victory of the Unionists, plunged him into a sharper and more militant radicalism. At the age of twenty-nine he was an ardent, scornful, clear-brained idealist and cynic, successful on platforms and brilliant with pens. He was becoming a stand-by of the Radical press, a thorn in the Tory flesh. His wife, by this time, after four years of marriage, definitely disliked him, because he had bad, sharp manners, was often disagreeable to her, often drank a little too much, and obviously despised the things she said. She consoled herself with going to parties, spoiling her babies, and flirting with other people. He consoled himself with politics, writing, talking and drinking. An ill-assorted couple. Maurice hoped that his children would be more what he desired. So far, of course, they were fonder of Amy. Even the boy was fonder of Amy, though sons often have a natural leaning towards their fathers, and frequently

grow up with no more than a careless affection for their mothers for, contrary to a common belief, the great affection felt by Œdipus for his mother is most unusual, and, indeed, Œdipus would probably have felt nothing of the sort had he known of the relationship. It is noticeable that sons usually select as a bride a woman as unlike their mothers and sisters as possible. It makes a change.

So Maurice had reason to hope that his son, anyhow, would prefer him as time went on, and therefore be inclined to share his point of view about life. As to the girl, she might grow up a fool or she might not; impossible to tell, at three years old. Most girls did.

In 1887 the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria occurred. Maurice wrote a deplorably unsuitable article for the occasion, called "Gaudeamus," and taking for its theme the subject races of Ireland and India and the less fortunate and less moneyed classes in Great Britain, which brought him into a good deal of disrepute, and made Amy more than ever disgusted with him.

"Hardly the moment," papa commented. "One sympathises with his impatience, but the dear old lady's jubilee is hardly the moment to rub in the flaws of her empire."

14

PAPA AND THE FAITH

Papa was now a Roman Catholic again. After three or four years of Ethicism, the absence of a God had begun to tell on him. It had slowly sapped what had always been the very foundation of his life—his belief in absolute standards of righteousness. For, if there were no God, on what indeed did these stand-

ards rest? It was all very well to sing in South Place of "the great, the lovely and the true," but what things *were* great, lovely and true, and how could one be sure of them, if they derived their sanction from nothing but man's own self-interested and fluctuating judgments? Deeply troubled by these thoughts, which were, of course, by no means new to him, papa was driven at last out of his beautiful and noble half-way house to the bleak cross roads.

Either he must become a moral nihilist, or he must believe again in a God. Since to become a moral nihilist was to papa unthinkable, so alien was it from all his habits, his traditions and his thought, so alien, indeed, from all the thought of his period, the only alternative was to believe in a God. And papa, swung by reaction, determined that this time (was it by way of atonement, or safeguard?) he would do the thing thoroughly. He would enter once more into that great ark of refuge from perplexing thoughts, the Roman branch of the Catholic Church. There (so long as he should remain there) he would be safe. He would rest therein like a folded sheep, and wander no more. So, humbly, in the year 1886, he did allegiance again to this great and consoling Church (which, as he said, he had never left, for you cannot leave it, though you may be unfaithful), and worshipped inconspicuously and devoutly in a small and austere Dominican chapel.

His only grief was that mamma at this point struck. She made the great refusal. She loved papa no less faithfully than ever, but his continuous faiths had worn her out. She said, quietly, "I am not going to be a Roman Catholic again, Aubrey."

He bowed his head to her decision. It was perhaps,

he admitted, too much to expect that she should. "But not *Roman* Catholic, dearest . . ." was his only protest. "Surely not *Roman*, now."

"I beg your pardon, Aubrey. Catholic. Anyhow, I am too old to join new churches, or even the old ones again."

"You will stay an Ethicist, then," he said, tentatively.

"No. I have never cared very much for that. I don't think I shall attend any place of worship in future."

He looked at her, startled, and placed his hand on hers, impeding the rapidity of her embroidery needle.

"Anne—my dear love. You haven't lost faith in everything, as I have been in danger of doing during the last year? The South Place chapel hasn't done that to you, dear one?"

Mamma let her work lie still on her lap, while papa's hand rested on hers. She seemed to consider, looking inwards and backwards, down and down the years.

"No, Aubrey," she said presently. "The South Place chapel hasn't done that to me. It wasn't important enough. . . ."

Her faint smile at him was enigmatic.

"I don't," she added, "quite know what I do believe. But I have long ago come to the conclusion that it matters very little. You, you see, have seemed equally happy for a time, equally unhappy after a time, in all the creeds or no-creeds. And equally good, my dear. I suppose I may say that I believe in none of them, or believe in all. In any case, it matters very little. I have come with you always into the churches and out of them, but now I think you will find peace in the Rom—in the Catholic Church, without me, and I fear that so much ritual, after so much lack of it, would

only fuss me. I shall stay at home. There is a good deal to do there always, and I am afraid I am better at doing practical things than at thinking difficult things out. You won't mind, Aubrey?"

"My darling, no. You must follow your own conscience. Mine has been a sad will-o'-the-wisp to us both—but, God helping me, it has lighted me now into my last home. . . . Yet who knows, who knows? . . ."

Mamma gently patted his hand and went on with her embroidery, bending over it her patient, near-sighted, spectacled eyes. She was mildly, unenthusiastically relieved to be done with the Ethical Church. She had never really liked those hymns. . . . Dear Aubrey, he would be happier again now. He could take to himself confidently once more those eternal moral values which had threatened him during the past six months with their utter wreckage and collapse. Once more he would be able to give reasons for his faith in virtue, for his belief that lying, theft, selfishness and adultery were wrong. Once more the world's foundations stood, and papa would not lie wakeful in the night and sigh to watch them shake.

But the solitary, unworthy little thought nagged at mamma's mind, "Amy will sneer. Amy will make foolish, common fun of him. . . ."

Dismissing Amy as a silly and vulgar little creature, mamma folded her embroidery and went to speak to the cook.

15

KEEPING HOUSE

Speaking to the cook. What a delightful kind of conversation this must be. For, if you are a proper

housewife, you do not just say to the cook, "Kindly provide meals, as usual, for the household to-day. That is, in fact, what you are paid to do. So do it, and let me hear no more about it." Instead, you go to the larder and see what is in it. You find a piece of meat, and try to guess what it is. You say, "We will have that neck of mutton, or loin of beef" (or whatever you think it is) "roasted, boiled, or fricasseed, for lunch. Then, of what is left of it, you will make some nice cutlets for dinner. Now how about sweets?" Then you and the cook will settle down happily for a long gossip about sweets—a delightful topic. The cook says, "I had thought of a nice jam roll." You say that you, for your part, had thought of something else, and so it goes on, like a drawing-room game, until you or the cook win, by sheer strength of will. Cooks usually have most of this, so they nearly always win. They can think of more reasons than you can why the thing suggested is impossible. They know there is not enough jam, or cream, or mushrooms, or bread-crumbs—not enough to make it *nice*, as it should be made. Rather would they suggest a nice apple charlotte. . . .

"Very well, cook; have it your own way. You have won, as usual. But it has been a good game and I have Kept House." That is what the good housewife (presumably) reflects, as she leaves the kitchen.

Perhaps there is more to it than this; perhaps bills are also discussed, and butchers and groceries, and the price of comestibles. No one who has not done it knows precisely what is done, or how. It is the cook's hour and the housewife's, and no fifth ear overhears. Mrs. Garden in the year 1886 had done it every day for thirty-one years. Whether as an Anglican, a Uni-

tarian, a Roman Catholic, an Agnostic, a Quaker, an Irvingite, a Seventh-day Adventist, a Baptist, or an Ethicist, still she had daily Kept House. Magic phrase! What happens to houses unkept, Rome had idly asked. Mamma had shaken a dubious head. No house that she had ever heard of had been unkept.

16

UNA

Una, staying in Essex with friends, contracted an engagement with a neighbouring young yeoman farmer, whom she used to meet out riding. The friends protested, dismayed at such a *mésalliance* having been arranged for under, so to speak, their auspices. But Una, now twenty-three, grandly beautiful, alternately lazy and amazingly energetic, looking like Diana or a splendid young Ceres, with no desires, it seemed, but for the healthy pleasures of the moment, held firmly to her decision. She loved her Ted, and loved, too, the life he led. She would wed him without delay. She went home and told her family so.

Papa said, "If you are sure of your love and his, that is all that matters, little Una—" (with the faint note of deprecation, even of remorse, with which he was wont to say her name, in these days when he believed once again in the Athanasian creed; for, though he might have bestowed this name in the most Trinitarian orthodoxy, the fact was that he had not; it had been a badge of incomplete belief).

Mamma said, "Well, child, you were bound to marry someone in the country. I always knew that. And you won't mind that he and his people eat and talk

a little differently from you, so I think you'll be happy. Bless you."

To Rome mamma said, "There's one thing about Una; she always knows what she wants and goes straight for it. I wish she could have married a gentleman, but this young fellow is a good mate for her, I believe. She won't care about the differences. There's no humbug about Una. She's the modern girl all through. Splendid, direct, capable children they are."

That was in the year 1887, and mamma did not know that in the nineteen twenties there would still be girls like Una, and people would still be calling them the modern girl, and saying how direct, admirable and wonderful, or how independent, reckless and headstrong, they were, and, in either case, how unlike the girls of thirty and forty years ago. For, in popular estimation, girls must be changing all the time—new every morning; there must be a new fashion in girls, as in hats, every year. But those who have lived on this earth as much as sixty years know (though they never say, for they like, amiably, to keep in with the young by joining in popular cries, and are too elderly to go to the trouble of speaking the truth), that girls, like other persons, have always been much the same, and always will be. Not the same as one another, for the greyhound is not more different from the spaniel than is one girl from the next; but the same types of girls and of boys, of women and of men, have for ever existed, and will never cease to exist, and there is nothing new under the sun. Yet in the eighteen eighties and nineties our ancestors were talking blandly of the New Woman, just as to-day people babble of the Modern Girl.

Rome said, "Yes, Una'll be all right. She knows

the way to live" . . . and was caught by her own phrase into the question, what is the way to live, then? Mine, Una's, Vicky's, Stanley's, Maurice's, papa's? Perhaps there is no way to live. Perhaps the thing is just to live, without a way. And that is, actually, what Una will do.

Una's Ted came to stay in Bloomsbury with the Gardens. He was large and silent and beautiful, and ate hugely, and looked awful, said Vicky, in his Sunday clothes, which were the ones he wore all the time in London. Also, his boots creaked. But you could see, through it all, how he would be striding about his native fields in gaiters and breeches and old tweeds, sucking a pipe and looking like a young earth-god. You could see, therefore, why Una loved him; you could see it even while he breathed hard at meals in his tight collar, and sucked his knife. He was physically glorious; a young Antæus strayed by mistake to town. He and Una were a splendid pair.

Una cared not at all what impression he made on her family. She was not sensitive. The touch of his hands made her quiver luxuriously, and when he took her in his arms and turned her face up to his and bruised her mouth with kisses, the world's walls shivered and dissolved round her and she was poured out like water. He was beautiful and splendid and her man, and knew all about the things she cared for, and she loved him with a full, happy passion that responded frankly and generously to his. They chaffed and bickered and played and caressed, and talked about horses and dogs and love, and went to the Zoo.

Amy giggled behind the young man's back, and said, "*Did* you see him stuffing his mouth with bun and trying to wash it down with tea out of his saucer?"

"Why not?" said Rome. "And he did wash it down; he didn't only try."

"*Well!*" Amy let out a breath and nodded twice. "Rather Una than me; that's all."

17

STANLEY

These years, '87, '88, '89, were stirring years for Maurice and Stanley. In them were founded the Independent Labour Party and the Christian Social Union and the *Star* newspaper. And there was the great dock strike and "bloody Sunday," on which Maurice disgraced Amy and himself by joining in an unseemly fracas with the police, in which he incurred a sprained wrist and a night in prison. In point of fact, as Amy said, he was rather drunk at the time.

Stanley enjoyed the labour movement. She was not, like Maurice, merely up against things; she eagerly swam with the tide and the tide which carried her during this particular phase of her life was revolutionary labour. She was joyously in the van of the movement. The dock strike stirred her more than the Pigott forgeries, more than the poisoning of Mr. Maybrick by Mrs. Maybrick, more than the death of Robert Browning.

Stirring times indeed. But in '89 something happened which stirred Stanley more profoundly than the times. She fell in love and married. It was bound to occur to such an ardent claimer of life. The man was a writer of light essays and short stories and clever unproduced plays. He was thirty, and he had an odd, short white face and narrow laughing eyes

beneath a clever forehead, and little money, but a sense of irony and of form and of the stage. He was in the most modern literary set in London and his name was Denman Croft. At first Stanley thought him very affected and she was right, for the most modern literary set *was* affected just then; but in a month or so she loved him with an acute, painful ecstasy that made her dizzy and blinded her to all the world besides. Her work lost interest; she was alive only in those hours when they were together; her love absorbed her body and soul. Why, he protested, did she not live in the more reasonable parts of London and meet people worth meeting? All sorts of exciting, amusing things were happening in the world of letters and art just now and she ought to be in it. Stanley began to feel that perhaps she ought. After all, one could be progressive and fight for labour reform and trade unions as well in the west as in the east. Then, while she was thus reflecting, it became apparent to her that Denman Croft was going immediately to propose marriage to her. She had for some weeks known that he loved her, but was scarcely ready for this crisis when it came. Passionate ecstasy possessed them both; they sank into it blind and breathless and let its waves break over them.

Life, life, life. Stanley, who had always lived to the uttermost, felt that she had never lived before. Spirit, brain and body interacted and co-operated in the riot of their passion.

They married almost at once and took a house in Margaretta Street, Chelsea.

Stanley always reflected her time and it was, people said, a time of transition. For that matter, times always are, and one year is always rather different from

the last. In this year, the threshold of the nineties, all things were, it was said, being made new. New forms of art and literature were being experimented with, new ideas aired. New verse was being written, new drama, essays, fiction and journalism. Stanley was so much interested in it all (being, as she now was, in close touch with the latest phase in these matters) that her social and political earnestness flagged, for you cannot have all kinds of earnestness at once. Instead of going in the evenings to committee meetings and mass labour meetings, she now went to plays and literary parties. Instead of writing articles on women's work, she began to write poetry and short sketches. All this, together with the social life she now led and the excitement of love, of Denman, and of her new home, was so stimulating and absorbing that she had little attention to spare for anything else. Stanley was like that—enthusiastic, headlong, a deep plunger, a whole-hogger.

"They do have the most fantastic beings to dinner," Vicky said to her Charles. "Velvet coats and immense ties. . . . It reminds me of ten years ago, when I was being æsthetic. But these people are much smarter talkers. Denman says they are really doing something good, too. He's an attractive creature, though I think his new play is absurd and he's desperately affected. The way that child adores him! Stanley does go so head over ears into everything. None of the rest of us could love like that. It frightens one for her. . . . But anyhow I'm glad she's off that stupid trade union and sweated labour fuss. Maurice does more than enough of that for the family and I was afraid Stan was going to turn into a female fanatic, like some of those short-haired friends of hers.

That's not what we women ought to be, is it, my Imogen?"

Vicky caught up her Imogen, an infant of one summer, in her arms, and kissed her. But Imogen, neither then nor at any later time, had any clear idea about what women ought or ought not to be. Anything they liked, she probably thought. If, indeed, there were, specifically, any such creatures as women. . . . For Imogen was born to have a doubting mind on this as on other subjects. She might almost have been called mentally defective in some directions, of so little was she ever to be sure.

"Stanley," pronounced Vicky, "has more Zeitgeist" (for that unpleasant word had of late come in) "than anyone I ever met."

PART II
FIN-DE-SIÈCLE

I

ROME

THE threshold of the nineties. Decades have a delusive edge to them. They are not, of course, really periods at all, except as any other ten years may be. But we, looking at them, are caught by the different name each bears, and give them different attributes, and tie labels on them, as if they were flowers in a border. The nineties, we say, were gay, tired, *fin-de-siècle*, witty, dilettante, decadent, yellow, and Max Beerbohm was their prophet; or they were noisy, imperial, patriotic, militant, crude, and Kipling was their prophet. And, indeed, you may find attributes to differentiate any period from any other. What people said and wrote of the nineties at the time was that they were modern, which of course at the time they were; that they were hustling . . . ("In these days of hurry and rapid motion, when there is so little time to rest and reflect," as people say in sermons and elsewhere, as if the greater rapidity of motion did not give one more time to rest and reflect, since one the sooner arrives at one's destination); that they were noisy; that literary output was enormous; that (alternatively) the new writers were very good, or that the good writers had gone from among us. One knows the kind of thing; all discourses on contemporary periods have been full of it, from the earliest times even unto these last.

Rome was thirty-one. She was of middle height,

while to pay for having one's ideas printed. For printers were paid, and binders, even if not oneself. So it conferred a kind of cachet. Most literary persons sorely needed such a cachet, for you would never guess from meeting them that anyone would pay them for their ideas. On the other hand, publishing one's folly gave it away; one was then known for a fool, whereas previously people might have only suspected it. . . . In brief and in fine, writing was not worth while. Wise men and women would derive such pleasure as they could from the writings of others, without putting themselves to the trouble of providing reading matter in their turn. Reading matter was not like dinners, concerning which there must be give and take.

Thus the do-nothing Miss Rome Garden to the eager literary young men and women about her, who all thought that literature was having a new birth and that they were its brilliant midwives, as, indeed, it is not unusual to think. And possibly it was the case. Literature has so many new births; it is a hardy annual. The younger literary people of 1890 had a titillating feeling of standing a-tiptoe to welcome a new day. "A great creative period is at hand," they said. The old and famous still brooded over the land like giant trees. Such a brooding, indeed, has scarcely since been known, for in these later days we allow no trees to become giants. But in their shadow the rebellious young shoots sprang up, sharp and green and alive. The mid-Victorians were passing; the Edwardians were in the schoolroom or the nursery, the Georgians in the cradle or not yet anywhere; here was a clear decade in which the late Victorian stars might dance. It was a period of experiment; new forms were being

tried, new ideas would have been aired were any ideas ever new; new franknesses, so called, were permitted, or anyhow practised—the mild beginnings of the returning tide which was to break against the reticence of fifty years.

“I don’t,” said Mrs. Garden to Rome, “care about all these sex novels people have taken to writing now.”

But Rome rejected the phrase.

“Sex novels, mamma? What are they? Novels have always been about sex, or rather sexes. There’s nothing new in that; it’s the oldest story in the world. People must have a sex in this life; it’s inevitable. Novels must be about people; that’s inevitable too. So novels must be partly about sex, and they’re nearly always about two sexes, and usually largely about the relations of the two sexes to one another. They always have been. . . .”

All the same, mamma did *not* care about these sex novels that people had taken to writing now. *Problem* novels, she called them, for reasons of her own. Rome thought sex no problem; the least problematic affair, perhaps, in this world. Of course there were problems connected with it, as with everything else, but in itself sex was no problem. Rather the contrary. “The Moonstone,” now—*that* was a problem novel.

“I don’t like indecency,” said mamma, in her delicate, clipped voice. “These modern writers will say anything. It’s ill-bred.”

Mamma could not be expected to know that these literary libertines of 1890 would be regarded as quaint Victorian prudes in 1920.

“As to that book Mr. Jayne gave you, I call it merely silly,” mamma murmured, with raised brows, and so settled “Dorian Gray.”

"Silly it is," Rome agreed. "But here and there, though too seldom, it has a wit."

But mamma was not listening. Her mamma-like mind was straying after Mr. Jayne. . . .

2

MR. JAYNE

Mr. Jayne and Rome. Both brilliant, both elegant, both urbane, both so gracefully of the world worldly, yet both scholars too. Mr. Jayne wrote memoirs and enchanting historical and political essays. An amusing, yet erudite Oxford man, who had formerly been at the British Embassy at St. Petersburg. Hostesses desired him for their more sophisticated parties, because he had a wit, and knew Russia, which was at once more unusual and more fashionable then than now. It was at one of Vicky's dinner parties that he and Rome had first met. If Vicky thought, how suitable, it was only what anyone in the world must think about these two. Afterwards they met continually and became friends. Rome thought him conceited, clever, entertaining, attractive and disarming and the most companionable man of her wide acquaintance. By June, 1890, they were in love; a state of mind unusual in both. They did not mention it, but in July he mentioned to her, what he mentioned to few people, that he had a Russian wife living with her parents, a revolutionary professor and his wife, in the country outside Moscow.

They were spending Sunday on the Thames, rowing up from Bourne End to Marlow. They spoke of this matter of Mr. Jayne's wife after their lunch,

which they ate on the bank, in the shade of willows.

"How delightful," said Rome, taking a Gentleman's Relish sandwich.

Delightful to have a wife in Russia; to have a reason, and such a reason, for visiting that interesting land. Delightful for Mr. Jayne to have waiting for him, among steppes and woods, a handsome Russian female and two fair Slav infants . . . or perhaps they were English, these little Jaynes, with beautiful mouths and long, thrust-out chins. . . . Delightful, anyhow. The Russian country in the summer, all corn and oil and moujiks. Moscow in the autumn, all churches and revolutionaries and plots and secret police. And in the winter . . . but one cannot think about Russia in the winter at all; it does not bear contemplation, and one does not visit it. . . . What a romance! Mr. Jayne was indeed fortunate.

So Miss Garden conveyed.

"I am not there very much," said Mr. Jayne. "Only on and off. Olga prefers to live there, with her parents and our two children. She has many friends there, all very busy plotting. They are of the intelligentsia. Life is very interesting to her."

"I can imagine that it must be."

So cool and well-bred were Miss Garden and Mr. Jayne, that you never would have divined that the latter, eating sandwiches, was crying within his soul, "My dearest Rome. I dislike my wife. We make each other sick with ennui when we meet. We married in a moment's mania. It is you I want. Don't you know it? Won't you let me tell you?" or that the former, sipping cider, was saying silently, "You have told me this at last because you know that we have fallen in love. Why not months ago? And what now?"

Nothing of this they showed, but lounged in the green shade, and drank and ate, Miss Garden clear-cut and cool, in a striped cotton boating-dress, with a conically-shaped straw hat tipped over her eyes, Mr. Jayne in flannels, long and slim, his palish face shaved smooth in the new fashion, so that you saw the lines of his clever mouth and long, thrust-out chin. Mr. Jayne's eyes were deep-set and grey, and he wore pince-nez, and he was at this time thirty-six years old. At what age, Rome wondered, had he married Mrs. Jayne of the Russian intelligentsia?

However, they did not enter into this, but began to discuss the plays of Mr. Bernard Shaw, a well-known socialist writer, and Mr. Rudyard Kipling, a young man in India who was making some stir.

"We can still be friends," thought Rome, on their way home. "Nothing need be changed between us. This Olga of his is his wife; I am his friend. It would be very bourgeois to be less his friend because he has a wife. That is a view of life I dislike; we are civilised people, Mr. Jayne and I."

3

CIVILISED PEOPLE

And civilised they were, for the rest of the summer of 1890. In November Rome asked Mr. Jayne, who was having tea with her alone, whether he was visiting Russia shortly. He replied in the negative, for he was, he said, too busy working on his new book to get abroad.

"And further," he added, in the same composed tone, "I prefer to remain in the same country with you. I can't, you see, do without you at hand. You

know how often I consult you, and talk things over with you. . . . And further still," continued Mr. Jayne, quietly, "I love you."

So saying, he rose and stood over her, bending down with his hands on her shoulders and his pale face close to hers.

"My dearest," he said. "Let us stop pretending. *Shall* we stop pretending? Does our pretence do us or anyone else any good? I love you more than any words I've got can say. You know it, you know it . . . dear heart. . . ."

He drew her up from her chair and looked into her face, and that was the defeat of their civilisation, for at their mutual touch it broke in disorder and fled. He kissed her mouth and face and hands, and passion rose about them like a sea in which they drowned.

Five minutes later they talked it out, sitting with a space between them, for "While you hold me I can't think," Rome said. She passed her hand over her face, which felt hot and stung from the hard pressing of his mouth, and tried to assemble her thoughts, shaken by the first passion of her thirty-one agreeable and intelligent years.

"I'm not," she said, "going to take you away from your wife. Not in any way. What we have must make no difference to what *she* has. . . ."

It will be seen, therefore, that their conversation was as old as the world, and scarcely worth recording. It pursued the normal lines. That is to say, Mr. Jayne replied, "She has nothing of me that matters," rather inaccurately classing under the head of what did not matter, his children, his name, and the right to his bed and board. As is the habit in these situations, Mr. Jayne meant that what mattered, and what Mrs. Jayne

had not got, was his love, his passion, his spirit and his soul. These, he indicated, were Rome's alone, as Rome's were his.

What to do about it was the question. One must, said Rome, holding herself in, continue to be civilised. And what, enquired Mr. Jayne, is civilisation—this arbitrary civilisation of society's making, that binds the spirit's freedom in chains? It was all founded on social expediency, on primitive laws to protect inheritance, to safeguard property. . . . Had Rome read Professor Westermarck's great work on the history of human marriage? Rome had. What of it? The point was, there was Mrs. Jayne in Russia, and Mr. and Mrs. Jayne's two children. These were Mr. Jayne's obligations, and nothing he and she did must come between him and them. That laid firmly down, she and Mr. Jayne could do what they liked; that was how Rome saw it. One must keep one's contracts, and behave as persons of honour and breeding should behave.

"As I see it," said Rome, "the fact that we love each other needn't prevent our being friends. We are not babies. . . ."

"Friends," said Mr. Jayne, in agreement, doubt, scepticism, contempt, hope, or bitter derision, as the case might be.

And more they said, until they were interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Garden's papa, the Dean, who had called in his brougham to see mamma, but, mamma being out at Vicky's, he sat down between these two white, disturbed, hot-eyed and shaken persons and began to talk of Mr. Parnell and his disgrace.

Grandpapa opined that Mr. Parnell had no more place in public life.

Mr. Jayne replied that anyhow it appeared that he would be hounded out of it.

"Cant," he said. "Truckling to nonconformist cant and humbug and Catholic bigotry. A man's private affairs have nothing to do with his public life. It's contemptible, the way the Nationalists have caved in to that old humbug, Gladstone."

Grandpapa had always thought Gladstone a humbug (though not so old if it came to that; he himself was eighty-five and going strong), but with the rest of Mr. Jayne's thesis he was in disagreement. Our political leaders must not be men of notoriously loose lives. The sanctity of the home must, at all costs, be upheld.

"O'Shea's home," said Mr. Jayne, "never had much of that. Neither O'Shea nor Mrs. O'Shea was great on it."

"For that matter," Rome joined in, crisp and bland, as if civilisation had not met its débâcle in the drawing-room but a half hour since, "for that matter, what homes *have* sanctity? Why do people think that sanctity is particularly to be found in homes, of all places? And can a bachelor's or spinster's home have it, or do the people in the home need to be married? What is it, this curious *sanctity*, that bishops write to the papers about, and that is, they say, being attacked all the time, and is so easily destroyed? In what homes is it to be found? I have often wondered."

"Whom God hath joined together," replied grandpapa, readily. "That is the answer to your question, my dear child, is it not?"

"O God," muttered Mr. Jayne, but probably rather as an ejaculation than as a sceptical comment on the authority behind matrimony.

Whichever it was, grandpapa did not care about the phrase, and looked at him sharply. He believed Mr. Jayne to be an unbeliever, and did not greatly care for the tone of his writings. However, they conversed intelligently for a while about the future of the Irish party before Mr. Jayne rose to go.

"Come into the hall," his eyes said. But Rome did not go into the hall.

He was gone. Rome sat still in the shadow of the window. His steps echoed down the square.

"Do you see much of that young fellow, my dear?" grandpapa asked, in his old rumbling voice.

"Oh, yes," said Rome, feeling exalted and light in the head, and as if she had drunk alcohol. "Oh, yes, grandpapa. We are great friends."

"Do your parents like him, my child?"

"Oh, yes, grandpapa. Very much. Oh, I think everyone likes him. He is a great success, you know."

She was talking foolishly and at random, straying about the room, taking up books, wishing grandpapa would go.

Grandpapa grunted. Rather queer goings on, he thought, for Rome to be entertaining young men by herself when her papa and mamma were out. What were unmarried young women coming to? If mamma had gone on like that thirty years ago . . . But this, of course, was 1890—desperately modern. Grandpapa, though he not infrequently wrote to the *Times*, the *Spectator* and the *Guardian*, to say how modern the current year was (for, of course, current years always were and are), did not always remember it. The untrammelled (it seemed to him untrammelled) freedom of intercourse enjoyed by modern young men and women (especially young women) continually shocked

him. Grandpapa had enjoyed much free and untrammelled intercourse in his own distant youth, during the Regency, but fifty years of Victorianism had since intervened, and he believed that intercourse should not now be free. He could not understand his granddaughter, Stanley, who was continually abusing what she called the conventional prudery of the age; what further liberties, in heaven's name, did young women want? To do her justice, Rome did not join in this cry for further emancipation; Rome accepted the conventions, with an acquiescent, ironic smile. There they were: why make oneself hot with kicking over the traces? One accepted the social follies and codes. . . .

("On the contrary," Maurice would say, "I refuse them.")

"It will make no difference to them either way," said Rome.)

Rome, a good *raconteuse* and mimic, proceeded to entertain grandpapa with an account of a dinner party at which she had been taken in by that curious and noisy member of Parliament, Mr. Augustus Conybeare, whom grandpapa disliked exceedingly.

Then mamma and papa came home, and Rome went upstairs to dress for another dinner party. Thus do social life and the storm-tossed journey of the human soul run on concurrently, and neither makes way for the other.

4

ON THE PINCIO

Through that winter civilisation fought its losing battle with more primitive forces over the souls and bodies of Miss Garden and Mr. Jayne.

"There is only one way in which we can meet and be together," said Rome, "and that is as friends. There is no other relation possible in the circumstances. I will be party to no scandal, my best. If we can't meet one another with self-control, then we mustn't meet at all. What is the use of tilting at the laws of society? There they are, and thus it is. . . ."

"You make a fetish of society," said Mr. Jayne, with gloom. "For a woman of your brains, it is queer."

"Perhaps," said Rome.

Then, it becoming apparent that she and Mr. Jayne were not at present going to meet one another with self-control, Rome went for the winter to the city of that name, with her papa, whose spiritual home it, of course, now was. Mrs. Garden did not go, because she desired to be in at the birth of Stanley's baby.

But civilisation had not reckoned sufficiently with the forces of emotion. These led Mr. Jayne, but a few weeks after Miss Garden had departed, to follow her to Italy, and, in fact, to Rome.

So, one bright February morning, he called at the Gardens' hotel pension in the Via Babuino, and found Rome and her papa about to set forth for a walk on the Pincio. Miss Garden, looking pale, fair and elegant in a long, fur-edged, high-shouldered cape coat and a tall, pointed, blue velvet hat beneath which her hair gleamed gold, received him as urbanely, as coolly, as detachedly as ever; she seemed to have got her emotions well under control in the month since they had parted. Mr. Jayne responded to her tone, and all the morning, as they strolled about with Mr. Garden, they were bland and cool and amusing; well-bred English visitors, turning interested and satirical eyes on the

fashionable crowds about them, stopping now and then to exchange amenities with fellow-strollers, for Mr. Jayne knew Roman society well, and Mr. Garden had come armed with introductions from his co-religionists, though, indeed, he was little disposed for much society, wishing to spend such time as he did not devote to seeing Rome in studious research at the Vatican library. His daughter was a little afraid that the Eternal City might seriously disturb his faith, and that papa might fall under the undeniably fascinating influence of paganism, which makes so far finer and nobler a show in Rome than mediæval Christianity. And, indeed, with St. Peter's papa was not pleased; he scarcely liked to say so, even to himself, but it did seem to him to be of a garish hugeness that smacked almost of vulgarity, and pained his fastidious taste. On the other hand, there were many old churches of a more pleasing style, and in these his soul found rest when disturbed by the massive splendours of classical Rome. No; papa would not become a pagan; he knew too much of pagan corruptions and cruelties for that. Corruptions and cruelties he admitted, of course, in the history of Christianity also; corruption and cruelty are, indeed, properties of the unfortunate and paradoxical human race; but papa was persuaded that only defective Christians (after all, Christians always are and have been defective) were corrupt and cruel, whereas the most completely pagan of pagans had been so, and paganism is, indeed, rather an incentive than a discouragement to vice. In fact, papa was, by this time, thoroughly biassed in this matter, and so was probably safe. Or, anyhow, so his daughter hoped. For it would, there was no denying it, be exceedingly awk-

ward were papa to become a pagan, quite apart from the preliminary anguish with which his soul would be torn were he to be shaken from his present faith. Were there pagan places of worship in London? Probably papa would have to build a private chapel, and in it erect images of his new gods. . . . For pagans had never been happy without much worship; they had been the most religious of believers. Except, of course, the lax and broad-church pagans, and probably papa, if he got paganism at all, would get it strong.

So Rome was quite pleased that papa should be walking on the Pincio with her, getting a good view of the dome of St. Peter's, which is the finest and most impressive part of that cathedral, rather than wandering about the Forum and peering into the new excavations, murmuring scraps of Latin as he peered.

In the warm, sunlit air, with the band playing Verdi and the gay crowds promenading, and the enchanted city spread all a-glitter beneath them, Rome was caught into a deep and intoxicated joy. The bitter, restless struggling of the last months gave way to peace; the happy peace that looks not ahead, but rejoices in the moment. The tall and gay companion strolling at her side, so fluent in several languages, so apt to catch a half-worded meaning, to smile at an unuttered jest, so informed, so polished, so of the world worldly . . . take Mr. Jayne as merely that, and she had her friend and companion back again, which was deeply restful and vastly stimulating. And beneath that was her lover, whom she loved; beneath his urbane exterior his passion throbbed and leaped, and his deep need of her cried, and in her the answering need cried back.

5

IN THE CAMPAGNA

Together they walked in the Campagna, in the bright soft wash of the February sun. Mr. Jayne had been in Rome a week, and they had gone out to Tivoli together, without papa, who was reading in the Vatican library. They lunched at the restaurant by the waterfalls, then explored Hadrian's Villa with the plan in Murray, and quarrelled about which were the different rooms. Failing to agree on this problem, they sat down in the Triclinium and looked at the view and discussed the more urgent problem of their lives.

"You must," said Mr. Jayne, "come to me. It is the only right and reasonable way out. We'll live in no half-way house, with secrecy and concealment. We should both hate that. But Olga will not divorce me; it's no use thinking of that. In her view, and that of all her countrywomen, husbands are never faithful. The infidelity of a husband is no reason to a Russian woman for divorce. Unless she herself wants to marry another man, and that is likely enough, in Olga's case, to happen. We are nothing to each other, she and I. Such love as we had—and it was never love—is dead long ago. We don't even like each other."

"Curious," mused Rome, "not to foresee these developments at the outset, before taking the serious step of marriage. Marriage is an action too freely practised and too seldom adequately considered."

"That is so," Mr. Jayne agreed. "But, and however that may be, what is done is done. What we now have to consider, however inadequately, is the future. It is very plain that you and I must be together. Yes,

yes, yes. Nothing else is plain, but that is. The one light in chaos. . . . My dearest love, you can't be denying that. It is the only conceivable thing—the only thinkable way out."

"Way out," said Rome. "I think, rather, a way in. . . . Which way do we take—out or in?" Musingly she looked over the Campagna to blue hills, and Mr. Jayne, his eyes on her white profile, on the gleam of gold hair beneath her dark fur cap, and on her slender hands that clasped her knees, leant closer to her and replied, with neither hesitation nor doubt, "In."

"Indeed," said Miss Garden, "these questions can't be decided in this rough and ready, impetuous manner. The mind must have its share in deciding these important matters, not merely the emotions and desires. Or else what is the good of education, or of having learnt to think clearly at all?"

"Very little," said Mr. Jayne. "However, in this case the more clearly one thinks the more plain the way to take becomes. It is confused and muddled thinking that would lead us to conform to convention and give one another up, merely because of a social code."

"The social code," said Miss Garden, "though as a rule I prefer to observe it, is in this case neither here nor there. I have ruled that out; cleared the field, so to speak, for the essentials. Now, what *are* the essentials? Your wife, whom you have undertaken to live with . . ."

"By mutual agreement, we have given that up long since," said Mr. Jayne, not for the first time.

". . . and your children, whom you have brought into the world and are responsible for."

"They are their mother's. She lets me see nothing

of them. She is determined to bring them up as Russian patriots."

"Still, they are half yours, and it is a question whether you should not claim your share. In fact, I think it is certain that you should. If you broke off completely from your wife and lived with me, your right in them would be gone. . . . Then, of course, there is the ethical point as to your contract, the vows you made to your wife on marriage, which positively exclude similar relations with anyone else while she remains your wife."

"I ought never to have made them. I was a fool. The wrong is in the vows, not in their breach."

"Granted that they were wrong, that does not settle the further point of whether, having been made, with every circumstance of deliberation, they should not be kept."

"O God," said Mr. Jayne. "You talk, my dearest, like a pedant, a prig, or a book of logic. Don't you *care*, Rome?"

"You know," said Miss Garden, "that I do. . . . No, don't touch me. I must think it out. I *am* a pedant and a prig, if you like, and I *must* think it out, not only feel. But now I will think of the other side. Oh, yes, I know there is another side. We love one another, and we can neither of us be happy, or fully ourselves, without being together. Without one another we shall be incomplete, unhappy and perhaps (not certainly) morally and mentally stunted and warped. Indeed, I see that as clearly as you can. Further, our being together may, as you say, not hurt your wife; she may not care in the least. As to that, I simply don't know. How could I? She may even let you still have a share in your children. Russian

points of view are so different from ours. But one should be certain of that before taking any steps. Then there are still points on the other side, that we have to think of. Any children we might have would be illegitimate. That would be hard on them."

"In point of fact," said Mr. Jayne, "it is largely illusory, that hardship. And in this case they (if they should ever exist) needn't even know. You would take my name. Who is to go on remembering that I have a Russian wife? Very few people in England even know it. We should soon live down any talk there might be."

"And then," went on Rome, ticking off another point on her fingers, "there are my papa and mamma, whom we should hurt very badly. In their eyes what we are discussing isn't a thing to be discussed at all; it is a deadly sin, and there's an end of it. They are very fond of me, and they would be terribly unhappy. That too is a point to be considered."

"Perhaps. But not to be given much weight to. It's damnable to have to hurt the people we love—but, after all, we can't let our parents rule our lives. We're living in the eighteen nineties; we're not mid-Victorians. And we have to make up our own minds what to do with our lives. We can't be tied up by anyone else's views, either those of our relations or of society in general. We have to make our own judgments and choices, all along. And parents shouldn't be hurt by their children's choices, even if they do think them wrong; they should live and let live. All this judging for other people, and being hurt, is poisonous. It's a relic of the patriarchal system—or the matriarchal."

Miss Garden smiled.

"Possibly. I should say, rather, that it was inci-

dental to parental affection, and always will be. Anyhow, there it is. . . . They don't, of course, even believe that divorce is right, let alone adultery." Her cool, thoughtful enunciation of the last word gave it its uttermost value. Miss Garden never slurred or shirked either words or facts.

"But that," she added, "doesn't, of course, dispose of our lives. That's only one point out of many. The question is, what is, now and ultimately, the right and best thing for me and you to do. You've decided. Well, I haven't—yet. Give me a week, Francis. I promise I won't take more."

"You are so beautiful," said Mr. Jayne, changing the subject and speaking inaccurately, and lifted her hands to his face. "You are so beautiful. There is no one like you. You are like the golden sickle moon riding over the world. You hold my life in your two hands. Be kind to it, Rome. *I love you, I love you, I love you.* If we deny our love we shall be blaspheming. Love like ours transcends all barriers, and well you know it. Take your week, if you must, only decide rightly at the end of it, my heart's glory. The fine thing we shall make of life together, you and I, the fine, precious, lovely thing. It's been so poor and common—full of bickerings and jars and commonness and discontents. . . .

O Rome! . . ."

6

RUSSIAN TRAGEDY

The Russian woman, with her two beautiful children and her stout, dazed, unhappy mamma, waited in the hall of the flat of Mr. Jayne. They were weary, having

travelled across Russia and from Russia to London, to find Mr. Jayne, and then, having learnt that he was in Rome, straight from London thither, spending two nights in the train and arriving this morning, more alive than dead (for who, this side of the grave, is not?) but very tired. The two children were so tired that they whimpered disagreeably, and their mother often wiped their noses with her travel-grimed handkerchief, but not so often as they required it.

Olga Petrushka was a beautiful woman, square-headed, with a fair northern skin and large deep blue eyes, black-lashed, and massive plaits of flaxen hair. Her eyes looked wild and haunted, for Russians have such dreadful experiences, and her cheeks were hollowed; she looked like a woman who has seen death and worse too close, as indeed she had. She was shabbily dressed in an old fur dolman over a scarlet dress and a fur cap. The two children were bundled up in bearskin coats, like little animals. Her little dancing bears, she would call them in lighter moments. Ever and anon she would fling them sweet cakes out of her reticule, and they would gobble them greedily.

But Nina Naryshkin, their grandmother, sat and rocked to and fro, to and fro, and said nothing but, "Aie, aie, aie."

The hall porter turned on the little family a beaming and kindly eye. They were, in all probability, thieves, and not, as the Russian lady asserted, the family of Signor Jayne, so he would not admit them into Signor Jayne's rooms, but he liked to see their gambols.

Every now and then the younger lady would say, in Russian, "Cheer up, then, little children. Your father will soon be here and he will give you more sweet cakes. Aha, how your dirty little mouths water to hear it!

Boris, you rascal, don't pull your sister's pig-tail. What children! They drive me to despair."

And then Mr. Jayne arrived. He came in at the open hall door, with a tall, fair English lady, and he was saying to her, "If you don't mind coming in for a moment, I will get you the book."

The hall porter stepped forward with a bow, and indicated in the background Mrs. Jayne, her mamma, and the little Jaynes.

What a moment for Mr. Jayne! What a moment for Mrs. Jayne, her mamma and the little Jaynes! What a moment for Miss Garden! What a moment for the hall porter, who loved both domestic reunions and quarrels, and was as yet uncertain which this would be (it might even be both), but above all loved moments, and that it would certainly be.

And so it proved. Where Russians are, there, one may say, moments are, for these live in moments.

Olga Petrushka stepped forward with a loud cry and outstretched arms, and exclaimed in Russian, "Ah, Franya Stefanovitch!" (one of the names she had for him, for Russians give one another hundreds of names each, and this accounts in part for the curious, confused state in which this nation is often to be found) — "I have found you at last."

Mr. Jayne, always composed, retained his calm. He shook hands with his wife and mother-in-law and addressed them in French.

"How are you, my dear Olga? Why did you not tell me you wanted to see me? I would have come to Moscow. It is a long way to have come, with your mother and the children too. How are you, my little villains?"

"Ah, my God," said Mrs. Jayne, also now in French,

which she spoke with rapidity and violence. "How could I stay another day in Russia? The misery I have been through? Poor little papa—Nicolai Nicolai-vitch—they have arrested him for revolutionary propaganda and sent him to Siberia, with my brother Feodor. They had evidence also against mamma and myself and would have arrested us, and only barely we escaped in time, with the little bears. The poor cherubs—kiss them, Franya. They have been crying for their little father and the love and good food and warm house he will give them. For now they and we have no one but you. 'Go to England, Olga,' papa said as they took him. 'It is the one safe country. The English are good to Russian exiles, and your husband will take care of you and mamma and the little ones. . . .' But you are with a lady, Franya. Introduce us."

"I beg your pardon. Miss Garden, my wife, and Madame Naryshkin, her mother. Miss Garden and her father are great friends of mine. . . . If you will go into my rooms and wait for me a moment, Olga, I will see Miss Garden to her pension and return."

"No," said Miss Garden, in her fluent and exquisite French. "No, I beg of you. I will go home alone; indeed, it is no way. Good-evening, Madame Jayne and Madame Naryshkin."

Mr. Jayne went out into the street with her. His unhappy eyes met hers.

"To-morrow morning," he muttered, "I shall call. . . . This alters nothing. . . . I will come to-morrow morning and we will talk."

"Yes," said Miss Garden. "We must talk."

Mr. Jayne went back into the hall and escorted his family upstairs to his rooms.

"Aie, aie, aie," shuddered Olga Petrushka, flinging

off her fur coat and cap and leaping round the room in her red dress, like a Russian in a novel. "Let's get warm. Come, little bears"—she spoke German now—"to your papa's arms. Kiss him, Katya; hug him, Boris. Tell him we have come across Europe to be with him, now that all else is gone. Forgive and forget, eh, Franya Maryavitch? You and I must keep one another warm. . . . Aie, aie, aie, my poor papa," she wailed in Russian. "I keep seeing his face as they took him, and my poor Feodor's. As to mamma, she is dazed; she will never get over it. We must keep her always with us, poor little mamma. . . . Tea at once, Franya. I am going to be sick," she added in Magyar, and was.

Mr. Jayne laid his wife on his bed and took off her shoes and bathed her forehead, while she moaned in Polish. Then he made tea for her and the children and his mother-in-law, who sat heavily in a chair and drank five cups, and looked at him with drowsy, inimical eyes, saying never a word. He felt like a dead man, in a world full of ghosts. Who were these, who had this claim upon him? Their clinging hands were pulling him down, out of life into a tomb. The February evening shadows lay coldly on his heart. These poor distraught women, these little children—he must take infinite care of them, and let them lack for nothing, but he must not let them come close into his life; they would throttle it. His life, his true life, was with Rome. Rome, the gallant, fastidious dandy, with her delicate poise, her pride, her cool wit and grace. Not with this violent, unhappy, inconsequent Slav, chattering in several tongues upon his bed.

To-morrow he would go and talk to Rome . . . explain to Rome. . . .

7

ENGLISH TRAGEDY

Miss Garden received Mr. Jayne. Neither had slept much, for Mr. Jayne had given his bed to his family and lain himself on a horsehair couch, and Miss Garden had been troubled by her thoughts. Their faces were pale and shadowed and heavy-eyed.

Miss Garden said, "This is the end, of course. I shan't need a week now. Fate has intervened very opportunely."

"No," said Mr. Jayne, with passion. "No. Nothing is changed. For God's sake, don't think that our situation is changed. It is not. She wants protection and security and a home, and I will provide all those for her and her mother and the children. Me she does not want. They shall have everything they want. But I shall not live with them."

"You still think that you and I can live together?" Miss Garden was sceptical of his optimism. "I don't think your wife would tolerate that. No, Frank, it's no use. They belong to you. They need you. I can't come between you. It would be heartless and selfish. Imagine the situation for a moment . . . it is impossible."

They both imagined it. Mr. Jayne shuddered, like a man very cold.

"You don't want to be involved in such a—such a melodrama," he said, bitterly.

"Put it at that if you like. I take it we are neither of us fond of melodrama. But, apart from that, I said all along, and meant it, that if your wife wants you I can't take you. She has first claim."

"I shall not live with Olga Petrushka and her mother."

"That's your own affair, of course. You are very likely right, since you don't get on well together. But you must see that you and I can't . . ."

Miss Garden stopped, for her voice began to shake. How she loved him! She pressed her hands together in her lap till the rings bruised her fingers.

Mr. Jayne gazed at her gloomily, observing her lightly poised body, slim and elegant in a dark blue taffeta dress which stood out behind below the waist in a kind of shelf, and made her shape rather like that of a swan. He saw her slight, anguished hands that hurt each other, and the pale tremor of her face.

"She's been through hell, and she wants you," said Miss Garden, trying to keep control.

"I tell you I can't live with her, nor she with me. Do you want to turn my life into a tragi-comic opera?"

"Most life is a tragi-comic opera," said Rome, trying to smile. "Perhaps all."

"But you're resolved anyhow to keep yours clear of *my* tragi-comedies," he flung at her.

Then he apologised.

"I don't mean that; I don't know what I'm saying. . . . Oh, I won't press you now to decide. We'll wait, Rome. You'll see, in a month or so, how things have arranged themselves—how easy it will all be. Olga will have recovered her balance by then; she changes from hour to hour, like all Russians. In a few weeks she will be tired of me and want to be in Paris, or back in Russia. She doesn't really want me; it's only that she is unstrung by trouble. Upset; that's what she is. All I ask you to do is to wait."

"No, Frank. It can never be, unless she goes some-

time to live with someone else—some other man. Otherwise she would be likely, even if she left you for a time, to want you again at intervals. I can't make a third. . . . You see, whatever happens now, your family must always be a real fact to me, not an abstraction. I've seen them . . . Katya is just like you—your chin and eyes. . . . The children love you very much; I saw that. . . . And she loves you, too. . . ."

"She does not. That's not love—not as I know love."

"As to that, we all know love in different ways, I suppose. . . . Truly, Francis, I have quite decided. I can't live with you. . . . No, no, don't. . . ."

He was holding her in his arms and kissing her face, her lips, her eyes, muttering entreaties.

"If you loved me you'd do it."

"I do love you, and I shan't do it."

"I'm asking nothing dishonourable of you. You don't think it wrong on general principles; yesterday you were willing to consider it. You're just refusing life for a quixotic whim . . . refusing, denying life. . . . Rome, you can't do it. Don't you know, now you're in my arms, that you can't, that it would be to deny the best in us?"

"What's the best, what's the worst? I don't know, nor do you. I'm not an ethicist. All I know is that your wife, while she wants you, or thinks she wants you, has first claim. It's a question of fairness and decent feeling. . . . Or bring it down, if you like, to a question of taste. Perhaps that is the only basis there really is for decisions of this sort for people like us."

"Taste. That's a fine cry to mess up two lives by. I'd almost rather you were religious and talked of the will of God. One could respect that, at least."

"I can't do that, as I happen not to be sure whether God exists. And it would make nothing simpler really, since one would then have to discover what one believed the will of God to be. Don't do religious people the injustice of believing that anything is simpler or easier for them; it's more difficult, since life is more exacting. . . . But it comes to the same thing; all these processes of thought lead to the same result if applied by the same mind. It depends on the individual outlook. And this is mine. . . . Oh, don't make it so damnably difficult for us both, my dearest. . . ."

Miss Garden, who never swore and never wept, here collapsed into tears, all her urbane breeding broken at last. He consoled her so tenderly, so pitifully, so mournfully, that she wept the more for love of him.

"Go now," she said at last. "We mustn't meet again till we can both do it quietly, without such pain. Papa and I are going back to London next week. Write to me sometime and let me know how you do and where you are. My dearest Frank. . . ."

8

FOUNDERED

Rome was alone. She sat in a hard Italian chair, quite still, and felt cold and numb, and as if she had died. Drowned she felt, under deep cold seas of passion and of pain. Wrecked and foundered and drowned, at the bottom of grey seas. Something cried, small and weak and hurt within her, and it was the voice of love, or (as Mr. Jayne would have it) of life; life which she had denied and slain. Never had she greatly loved before; never would she greatly love again; and

the great love she now had she was slaying. That was what the hurt voice cried in her as she sat alone in the great, bare, chilly room, the sad little scaldino on the floor at her feet.

She was dry-eyed now that she was alone, and had no more to face Mr. Jayne's love and pain. Her own she could bear. Harder and harder and cooler and more cynical she would grow, as she walked the world alone, leaving love behind. Was that the choice? Did one either do the decent, difficult thing, and wither to bitterness in doing it, or take the easy road, the road of joy and fulfilment, and be thereby enriched and fulfilled? And what was fulfilment, and what enrichment? What, ah, what, was this strange tale that life is; what its meaning, what its purpose, what its end?

Rome did not know. She knew one thing only. Frustration, renunciation, death—whether you called your criterion the will of God, or social ethics, or a quixotic whim, or your own private standards of decency and taste, it led you to these; led you to the same sad place, where you lay drowned, dead beneath bitter seas.

Mid-day chimed over the city. Miss Garden rose, and put on her outdoor things, and went forth to meet her papa for lunch. Life moves on, through whatever deserts, and one must compose oneself to meet it, never betraying one's soul.

9

VICKY ON THE WORLD

"It's good to have you back again, my Rome," Vicky said. "I miss you at my parties. There are lots of new people I want you to meet. An adorable Oxford youth, whom you'll find after your own heart. Already

he writes essays like a polished gentleman of the world, and he a round-faced cherub barely out of school. A coming man, my dear, mark my words. Such brilliance, such style, such absurd urbanity! Denman introduced him. I prefer him enormously to Denman's other cronies—that affected Mr. Le Gallienne for instance, and that conceited young Beardsley. Not but that young Beardsley, too, has a wit. I'll say that for Denman—he keeps a witty table. . . . Well, have you brought papa back still a good Roman? Father Stanton says, by the way, we're to call the Pope's church in this country the Italian Mission. It's quite time papa had a change of creed, anyhow; I begin to fear for his health since he read 'Robert Elsmere' and wasn't driven by it to honest doubt."

"Neither," said Rome, "was he driven by the Forum to the pagan gods. One begins to think that papa is settling down."

"Oh, I trust not. Dear papa, he's not old yet. . . . What a country you have come back to, though, my dear. Strikes everywhere—dockers, railwaymen, miners, even tailors. . . . Maurice is perfectly happy, encouraging them all. But, darling Maurice, I'm *seriously* afraid he may cut Amy's throat one day. Serve her right, the little cat. If I were Maurice I'd beat her. Perhaps he will one day, when he's not quite sober. I wish she'd run off with one of the vulgar men she flirts with, and leave him in peace. *He'll* never run off, because he won't leave the children to her. Poor old boy, he's so desperately up against things the whole time. Mamma's miserable about him. I know, though she never says a word. However, she's consoled by all her nice grandchildren. Even grandpapa, you know, admits that the de-

plorable modern generation is doing its duty as regards multiplication. Why *do* old Bible clergymen like grandpapa think it so important to produce more life? One would think, one really *would* think, that there was plenty of that already. But no. Be fruitful, they say: multiply: replenish the earth. It says so in Genesis, and clergymen of grandpapa's generation can't get away from Genesis. Poor grandpapa. He's writing to the *Guardian*, as usual, about the Modern Woman. She's dreadfully on his mind. Latchkeys. He doesn't think women ought to have them. Why not? He doesn't explain. Men may open their front doors with keys, but women must, he thinks, always ring up the unfortunate maids. He can think of no reasons why; he is past reasons, but not past convictions. What, he asked in Stanley's drawing-room the other day, is to take the place, for women, of the old sanctities and safeties? "The new safeties, I imagine, sir," Denman replied. Grandpa grunted and frowned; he thinks women on bicycles really indecent, poor old dear. As a matter of fact, Denman does, too—at least ungraceful, which to him is the same thing. But Rome, my dear, you simply must get one. We're all doing it now. It's glorious; the nearest approach to wings permitted to men and women here below. Intoxicating! Stanley lives on hers, now her son has safely arrived. And it's transforming clothes. Short jackets and cloth caps are coming in. Bustles are no more. And, my dear—*bloomers* are seen in the land! Yes, actually. Stanley cycles in them; she looks delightful, whatever Denman says. No, I don't. Charles doesn't approve. Conspicuous, he thinks. And, of course, so it is. Well, men will be men. They'll never be civilised where women are concerned, most of them.

But the poor silly old world really does march a little. We're all getting most thrillingly *fin-de-siècle*. I wonder if all times have been as deliriously modern, while they lasted, as our times."

"Probably," said Rome. "It's one of the more certain, though more ephemeral, qualities that times have. I wonder at what age grandpapa began deploring it. Not during the Regency or under William the Fourth, I imagine. I suppose *his* grandpapa was deploring it then."

"Oh, and there's another shocking female modernism become quite common this winter, my dear. *Cigarettes!* I haven't perpetrated that myself yet, as Charles thinks that unfeminine too, and I'm sure the children would steal them and be sick. Besides, I don't think it really becoming to an elegant female. But Stanley does. That literary set of hers is a funny mixture of forwardness and reaction. Forward women and reactionary men, I think. Grandpapa hasn't tumbled to Stanley's cigarettes yet. My hat, when he does! Well, it's a funny world. I suppose my daughters will grow up smoking like their brothers, without thinking twice about it. . . . The darlings, they're all so troublesome just now. That kindergarten can't or won't teach Imogen to speak properly. If she gabbles like this at three, what will she do at thirty? And Hughie drawls and contradicts. . . ."

Their talk then ran along family lines.

IO

STANLEY AND DENMAN

Stanley pedalled swiftly, a sturdy, attractive figure in serge knickerbockers ("bloomers" they were called

while that graceful and sensible fashion of our ancestresses endured), along a smooth, sandy road between pine woods. The April sunlight flickered on the pale brown needle-strewn road; the light wind sang in the pines and blew dark curls of hair from under Stanley's sailor-hat brim. Her bicycle basket was full of primroses. Her round, brown cheeks glowed pink; her lips were parted in a low, tuneless song (tuneless because Stanley could never get a tune right). It expressed her happiness, relieved the pressure of her joy at being alive. Such a day! Such a bicycle! Such sweet and merry air!

She stopped, got off her bicycle, leant it against a gate, and lay down flat on her back in the wood, staring up into the green gloom. London, Denman, her baby, were far off. She was alone with beauty. She was passionately realising the moment, its fleeting exquisiteness, its still, fragile beauty. So exquisite it was, so frail and so transitory, that she could have wept, even as she clasped it close. To savour the loveliness of moments, to bathe in them as in a wine-gold, sun-warmed sea, and then to pass on to the next—that was life.

Then, presently, the moment lost its keenness, and she was no longer alone with beauty. Her husband and her baby broke the charmed circle, looking in. How she loved them! But they took from her something; her loneliness, that queer, eerie separateness, that only bachelors and spinsters know. They need not, to know it, be unattached, virgin bachelors and spinsters; love does not spoil separateness, but households do.

Stanley rose to her feet, brushed the pine-needles from her neat clothes and untidy hair, put on her sailor-

hat and got on her bicycle again. Before her there was a long slope down. To take it, brakeless, feet up on the rest, was like flying. Stanley was no longer a mystic, a wife or a mother; she was a hoydenish little girl out for a holiday.

She reached Weybridge station and entrained for London in one of the halting, smoke-palled, crawling trains of the period. In it she read Ibsen's "Doll's House," for she and Denman were going to see it next week at the Independent Theatre. What a play! What moralising! What purpose! What deplorable solemnity! There seemed, to the set of light-hearted and cynical æsthetes among whom Stanley moved, nothing to do about "A Doll's House" but to laugh at it. These strange, solemn Scandinavians! Yet numbers of cultured readers in England took it seriously, as cultured English readers love to take foreign plays. They found it impressive and fine, almost a gospel. Further, the bourgeois, the Philistines, the people who are inaccurately said to spend more time than the elect *in the street* (why is this believed of them?), mocked at it, so that there must be something in it, for, as has been well said (or if it has not, it should have been), majorities are always wrong.

"The fact is," said Stanley to herself, "the fact is, cultivated people like tracts. Especially cultivated women like tracts about their own emancipation. And, of course, in a way, they're right. . . . But plays with purposes . . ."

It will be observed that Stanley, whom nature had made to welcome purposes wherever found, had well assimilated the spirit of her literary group, which preferred art to be for the sake of art only. She had, as

Vicky said of her, so much *Zeitgeist*. What seemed to her and her friends the good drama of the moment was light social comedy, full of gay, sparkling nonsense and epigrams for the sake of epigrams. Or the more profound and mordant wit of Mr. George Bernard Shaw, who had lately begun to write plays. Mr. Shaw had, indeed, purpose, but his wit carried it off.

Waterloo. Even the trains of 1891 got there at last. Stanley went to look for her bicycle. Finding it and wheeling it off, she felt herself to be one of the happiest persons in the station. She had everything. A bicycle, a husband, a baby, a house, freedom, love, literary and social opportunity, charming friends. Life was indeed felicitous to such as she.

"Progress of Royal Labour Commission," the newspaper placards shouted. "More L.C.C. scandals. Free brass bands for the poor!"

Stanley frowned. It was a damnable world, after all. A vulgar, grudging, grabbing world. The voice of the press was as the shrill voice of Amy, the wife of Maurice. "Free brass bands for the poor!" That was how Amy would say it, with her silly, gibing laugh. Even, a little, how Irving would say it. But Irving, though he despised the democratic ways of the London County Council, and free brass bands for the poor, was not silly or spiteful. He was merely a delightful, philistine young gentleman on the Stock Exchange.

Stanley bicycled (amid perils less great, less numerous in the year 1891 than now) to Margaretta Street, Chelsea. There was the house, small, dingy, white, with a green door and a tiny square of front garden. Stanley found her latchkey, flung open the green door with a kind of impetuous, happy eagerness, and came face to face with her husband in the little hall.

"Hullo," he said, and quizzically surveyed her, up and down, from her blown hair and flushed cheeks to her neat, roomy knickerbockers and stout brogues. "Hullo."

"Hullo, Den. I've had the *rippingest* ride. How's baby? And yourself?"

"Both flourish, I believe. . . . You know we've people to dinner to-night? You've not left yourself a great deal of time, have you? . . . You don't look your best, my dear girl, if I may say so."

"No, I expect not; I'm blown to bits. What's it matter? Come on, Den, we must both hurry."

She ran upstairs, turned hot water into the bath, tiptoed into the nursery where her son slept, and back to her room. Denman was in his dressing-room, beyond the open door.

"I've had a lovely ride, Den. Weybridge way."

"Glad you enjoyed it. But lovely's the wrong word. Anything less lovely than a woman in those unspeakable garments I never saw. I detest them. Women ought to wear graceful, trailing things always. . . . I can't think why you *do* it. Your sense of beauty must be sadly defective."

"Beauty—oh, well, it's convenience that matters most, surely. For that matter, very few modern clothes, male or female, are beautiful. But I don't think these are ugly. One can't trail all the time; it's a dirty trick on foot and dangerous on a bicycle."

"It's better to be elegant, dirty and dangerous than frumpish, clean and safe. That's an epigram. The fact is, women ought never to indulge in activities, either of body or mind; it's not their rôle. They can't do it gracefully."

"What do you want them to do then, poor things? Just sit about?"

"Precisely that. You've expressed it accurately, if not very beautifully. An elegant inertia is what is required of women . . . what on earth has that girl done with my black socks? . . . Any activity necessary to the human race can be performed by such men as are prepared to sacrifice themselves. All this feminine pedalling about and playing ridiculous games and speaking on platforms and writing books and serving on committees—Lord save us."

"They'd get awfully fat, your sitting-about females; they wouldn't be graceful long. Hurry up, Den, or you'll be late, not I."

"We shall both be late. It matters very little. If any of our guests have the bad taste to be punctual it will serve them right. Crackanthorpe won't be punctual, anyhow, he never is. . . . Make yourself lovely to-night, Stan; I want to forget those awful bloomers. They make you look like a horrible joke in *Punch* about the New Woman."

"Well, I'd rather look like the New Woman than like the 'Woman (not new)' in the same pictures—sanctimonious idiots. . . . Really, Den, you're silly about women. . . ."

"Oh, for God's sake," said Denman, smothered in his shirt.

Stanley went to the bathroom with a touch of ill-humour, which she sang away, like a kettle, in clouds of steam.

Denman, hearing the tuneless song, winced in amused distaste. As a matter of fact, he would have liked a bath himself.

II

A YOUNG MASHER

How agreeable, how elegant and how fastidious were the young mashers of the early nineties! We shall not look upon their like again. Du Maurier has immortalised them, beautiful creatures with slim waists and swallow-tailed evening coats and clear-cut patrician features, chatting to magnificent women with curled mouths, straight brows and noble, sweeping figures. The women of those days, if we are to believe Du Maurier, were nobly built as goddesses, classical-featured, generous of stature and of bosom, but roped in straitly between ribs and hips, so as to produce waists that nature never planned. Because of this compression, they would often suffer greatly, and sometimes fall ill with anæmia, or cancer, or both, and die in great anguish. But, while they yet lived and breathed, they were noble and elegant objects, and their gentlemen friends matched them for grace.

Irving Arthur Penrhyn Garden, aged twenty-eight, earning a comfortable and honest livelihood on the Stock Exchange, was a masher. He lived in bachelor chambers in Bruton Street, and was a popular diner-out and dance-goer, for, though he had not brilliance or fame, he had dark and slim good looks, cheerfulness, *savoir faire*, and was that creature so sought of hostesses, an agreeable young bachelor. His tastes were healthy, his wits sound, his political and religious views gentlemanly, and his prospects satisfactory. Present correctness and future prosperity were stamped on Irving Garden; so unlike that queer fish, his brother Maurice, the Radical journalist, who was stamped with

present incorrectness and future failure. Irving would, no doubt, make a good marriage sometime. Meanwhile he was enjoying life. He had no part with the high-brows, the cranks, the fops, the æsthetes or any other extreme persons; he took no interest in foreign literature, Home Rule for Ireland, the Woman's Movement, the Independent Theatre, labour agitations, the new art, George Meredith, or Russian exiles, finding them (respectively) uninteresting, impracticable, unattractive, depressing, paid-by-anarchist-gold, queer, unintelligible and a damned nuisance. He considered his brother Maurice to be playing the wrong game; Stanley's friends he thought an affected, conceited crew, both the men and the women being unsexed, and for ever writing things one didn't want to read. Rome fell too easily into superfluous irony, so that people never knew when she was pulling their legs, and if she didn't marry soon, now that she was over thirty, people would begin thinking her an old maid. Una was all right, but shouldn't have married down. And, though Irving was an affectionate youth and loved his parents, he did think it a little comic of the pater to change his religion *quite* so often; it made people smile. There should be limits to the number of religions allowed to each man in his life. Anyhow, what was wrong with the C. of E.? On the whole, Vicky was the member of his family of whom Irving most approved. Vicky seemed to him what a woman should be. She looked pretty, dressed and danced well, was amusing, lived in the right part of London, and gave very decent, lively little dinners, at which people weren't always trying to be clever. Or anyhow *he* wasn't asked to the ones at which they tried to be clever.

And with all this, Irving was no fool. He was doing

very well at his job, had a good sound head, quite well stocked with ideas, and knew his way about.

Such was Irving Arthur Penrhyn Garden, walking cheerfully, gracefully and competently through the year of grace 1891.

12

RUSSIAN INTERLUDE

That summer Russian refugees were greatly the mode. They would flee to Great Britain in shoals from the fearful atrocities of their government. Those who came were mostly of the intellectual classes (the less intellectual being too stupid to move), who had been plotting, or writing, or speaking, or otherwise expressing their distaste for their country's constitution, and thus incurring the displeasure of the authorities. Some of them had been sent to Siberia and had escaped; others had served their time there and returned; others again had not yet visited that land, but feared that they might. Once in London, they found kind English intellectuals eager to take an interest in them, and plenty of their own countrymen with whom to meet and continue to plot. It was quite the fashion, in the nineties, to have a few exiled Russians at your parties. They introduced a new way of taking tea, very nasty, with lemon and no milk. Vicky's youngest daughter, Imogen, as an infant, was once given a sip of this tea from the cup of a hairy Russian professor, and was sent up to the nursery for spewing it out. Imogen developed thus an early and unjust distaste for Russians which did not leave her through life.

In the May of 1891, some new Russian refugees suddenly broke on London—the unexpected and

hitherto little mentioned wife, mother-in-law and children of Mr. Jayne, the brilliant writer of essays and memoirs. It had been vaguely rumoured before, that Mr. Jayne had some kind of Russian wife, but no one had expected her to make an appearance; it had been supposed that Mr. Jayne, being a man of some *savoir faire*, would have seen to that. However, here she was, a large and handsome Russian woman with two large and handsome children, a stout, tragic, yet conversational mamma, an inconsequent manner of speech, like that of Russians in novels, and a wide acquaintance with other Russian refugees, with whom she plotted on Sunday afternoons and all through Thursday nights. She settled, with her mother and children, in Mr. Jayne's flat. Mr. Jayne left the flat to them and took rooms of his own some way off; he probably thought he would be in the way if he lived in the flat, where Mrs. Jayne entertained her fellow countrymen a good deal. Mrs. Jayne accused him bitterly of neglecting her in her loneliness and grief. He replied that experience had proved that they were not happy together, and that, therefore, he would provide for the support of her, her mother and his two children, but would not share a dwelling with them, which would be both foolish and immoral. He added that, as she knew, he wished she and her mother would sometime see their way to living abroad, where they would be much happier. Mrs. Jayne replied that they intended to live in London until the Day of Deliverance, by which she meant the day when they could with safety return to Russia. She then went into hysterics and said that doubtless he wished her dead.

Mr. Jayne said, "These scenes make life impossible. You drive me to leave London. I shall live in Italy for

the present. My bank will pay you an allowance, and I will visit you from time to time."

"Why do you hate me so, Franya Stefanovitch?" she cried.

"I don't hate you. But you know as well as I do what a poor business we make of living together. It is one of the worst and most unintelligent forms of immorality for two people who irritate each other to expose themselves to misery and anger by living together. Therefore, with no malice, we will live apart."

"There's another woman. You wish to live with a mistress. I know it."

"If you think so, get a divorce."

"Never. I will never divorce you. You are my husband, and the father of my poor little bears. Who ever heard of a faithful husband? We say in Russia that they are like the golden bear—a fabulous creature. No, I must put up with your infidelities. But if you leave me for too long I shall come and find you, and stick a knife into you and your mistress. I am not patient, Franya."

"I never supposed that you were, Olga. And I may tell you, though I do not expect you to believe me, that I have no mistress, and never have had."

She laughed at him.

"Ha! ha! Are you the golden bear, then, found at last? Go away with you, you and your lies. You make me sick. . . . I wish that you were dead."

The last part of this conversation took place at the hall door, and, as Mr. Jayne went out, a young Russian came in. He was Sergius Dmitri, a cousin of Mrs. Jayne's, a student, who had also fled from Russia during the recent troubles. He was a passionate admirer of his cousin, and wished very much that she would get

rid of this cold, unloving English husband of hers, and come to live with him. He heard her last words to Mr. Jayne.

"Sergius," she said, seeing him, "I want you to do me a service. Follow my husband this afternoon and see where he goes and whom he sees. I suspect him of having a mistress, and I wish to be certain. If he has, he will go straight to her now. . . . I'll be revenged on him, the villain. After him, Sergius."

The young Russian saw Mr. Jayne disappearing round the corner and hurried after him.

Mr. Jayne went to call on the Gardens. He took Rome out with him, and they sat on a bench in the garden in Bloomsbury Square.

"You must come away with me," he said. "We will live in Italy. She hates me. So does her mother. I can't live in the same town with them, let alone the same house. I have told her so. I am going to live in Italy, and work there at my books. Am I to go alone, or will you come?"

Rome saw across the square the windows of the house of her papa and mamma. She considered them; she considered also life, in many of its aspects. She considered international marriages, and unhappy family life. Love she considered, and hate, the enduringness and the moral and spiritual consequences of each. She thought of her own happiness, of Mr. Jayne's, of Mrs. Jayne's, of that of their two children. Of social ethics she thought, and of personal joy, and of human laws, which of them stand merely on expediency, which on some ultimate virtue. She thought also of vows, of contracts, and of honour. Having considered these things, and considering also her very great love for Mr.

Jayne and his for her, she turned to him and opened her lips to reply.

But the words, whatever they were which she would have uttered—and neither Mr. Jayne nor anyone else was ever to know—were checked before her tongue formed them. For someone jumped out of the trees behind the bench on which they sat, and jabbed a long knife into Mr. Jayne's back, between the shoulders, and rushed away.

Other people near ran up. Mr. Jayne had fallen choking forward. They did not dare to remove the knife, but carried him out into the square and into the Gardens' house, where he lay on his side on a couch, unconscious, choking and bleeding at the lungs. The doctor was in attendance in ten minutes, but could do little, and in twenty Mr. Jayne was dead.

The assassin had, meanwhile, been captured. He proved to be a Russian, one Sergius Dmitri, described as a student, living in London. The only account of his action he gave was that he had known Mr. Jayne in Russia and disliked him, and that Mr. Jayne had not done his duty by his wife, who was Sergius Dmitri's cousin. So Sergius Dmitri had, in a moment of impulse, knifed Mr. Jayne. No, he could not say that he regretted his action.

His record showed him to be of the anarchist persuasion, and a thrower of several bombs in his native land, some of which had reached their mark. Human life was not, it was apparent, sacred to him. Mrs. Jayne, prostrated with grief, cursed him for murdering her husband, the father of her children, who had devotedly loved her and whom she had devotedly loved. He had never neglected her; that was a fancy of her cousin's, who had been a prey to jealousy.

Sergius Dmitri was hanged. Mrs. Jayne continued for a time to live in her husband's flat, supported by his money, but, soon tiring of widowhood, married a fellow-countryman and went, with her mother and children, to live in Paris.

Miss Garden, who had been so close a witness of the horrid event, and who was known besides as an intimate friend of Mr. Jayne's, never afterwards referred to the affair, even to her relatives. Miss Garden was no giver of confidences; no one ever learnt how she had felt about the business or about Mr. Jayne. There were not wanting, of course, those who said that these two had loved too well, had, in fact, been involved in an affair. But, in view of Miss Garden's reputation for cool inviolability, and of her calm manner after the tragedy, such rumours obtained little credence. Miss Garden did, indeed, leave London shortly after the inquest, and spent the rest of the summer in the country, but she returned in the autumn as apparently bland, cool and composed as always.

13

NINETY-TWO

Eighteen ninety-two. Mr. Garden was troubled by the death, in January, of Cardinal Manning, and by the disputes conducted in the press between Professor Huxley, Mr. Gladstone and the Duke of Argyll concerning the Book of Genesis and the existence of God, which had, in the eyes of all these eminent persons, some strange connection one with another. Mrs. Garden's father, the Dean, was, on the contrary, troubled by neither of these events, since he did not care for the

Cardinal, knew that the Professor had not, theologically, a leg to stand on, and the Duke, at most, one. Grandpapa was more stirred, in the early part of 1892, by the untimely death of the Duke of Clarence, by the alarming increase of female bicyclists, and by the prevalent nuisance of that popular song, "Ta-ra-ra-ra-boomdeay."

Vicky was stirred by Paderewski, by the influenza epidemic, which all her children got, and by the new high-shouldered sleeve; Maurice by the doings of the L.C.C. Progressives, the imminence of the parliamentary elections, the just claims but ignorant utterances of the Labour Party, woman's suffrage, the birth of the *Morning Leader*, and Mr. Charles Booth's "Life and Labour in London"; Stanley by woman's suffrage, "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," the comedies of Mr. Oscar Wilde and Mr. J. M. Barrie, "The Light That Failed," and Mr. H. G. Wells; Irving by golf, Mr. Arthur Roberts, Miss Marie Lloyd and "Sherlock Holmes"; and Una by the arrival of a new baby and the purchase of a new hunter.

Rome was not very greatly stirred by any of these things. Into her old detached amusement at the queer pageant of life had come a faint weariness, as if nothing were very much worth while. If she thought anything worth serious comment, she did not reveal it. Life was to her at this time more than ever a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing. She went on her way as usual, reading, seeing pictures, hearing music, meeting people, talking, smoking, bicycling, leading the life led by intelligent dilettanti in the small, cultivated nucleus of a great city. There was nothing to show that she endured the world with difficulty; that in the early mornings she would wake and lie helpless, without

armour, waiting the onslaught of the new day, and in the evenings would slip from her armour with a shivering sigh, to drown engulfed by darkness and the hopeless passion of the night. "Some day," she would say to herself, "I shall not mind so much. The edge will get blunt. Some day . . . some day. . . ."

But the black night mocked her, and she could not see that day on the furthestmost dip of the horizon; she could only see Mr. Jayne's dear, pale face turned to her with wistful hoping in his grey eyes behind their glasses, and he was saying, "Am I to go alone, or will you come?" and then, even as, having considered life, she opened her lips to reply, there was Mr. Jayne lurching forward, choked with blood, his question answered, for he was to go alone.

"My dear," whispered Rome, in tears, to the unanswering, endless night. "My dear. Come back to me, and I will give you anything and everything. . . . But you will never come back, and I can give you nothing any more."

And thus she could not see, however far off, that day when she should not mind so much, that day when the edge should get blunt.

Maurice, in 1892, was against very nearly everything. He was against the Conservative party, for the usual reasons. He was against the Liberal party, because Mr. Gladstone opposed woman's suffrage and the Labour party and the Eight Hour Day. He was against the Woman's Suffrage Bill because it was a class Bill. He was against Mr. Keir Hardie and the new Labour party because they talked what he considered sentimental tosh, damaging their own cause, and because Amy, his wife, echoed it parrot-like. He was against the Social Democratic Federation for the same

reasons, and because it did not prevent its members from making bombs. He was against the socialist meetings in Hyde Park and Trafalgar Square which he had been used to approve, because they too talked tosh. More and more, as Maurice advanced from the heat of youth into the clear-sighted unsentimentality of middle life (he was now thirty-five), he disliked tosh, and more and more most of the world seemed to him to be for ever talking it. The people, the parliamentarians, the press, the government classes, the imperialists, the democrats, the middle classes, rivalled one another in the flow of cant and nonsense they emitted. O God, for clear heads and hard facts, unmuddled by humbug and romanticism! Almost, Maurice was impelled to vote for Lord Salisbury, whose cool, cynical hardness was a relief; but, after all, deeper than his hatred of sentimentalism, lay his hatred of injustice and economic cruelty and class privilege. He was a democrat impatient with democracy, a journalist despising journalism, the product of an expensive education at war with educational inequality, a politician loathing politics, a husband chafing at his wife, a child of his age in rebellion against it, an agnostic irritated by the thoughtful, loquacious agnosticism of his day.

"There seems," as his mother said of him, "to be no hole into which Maurice fits. Whereas Stanley fits into them all. They are both too extreme, dear children. It is neither necessary, surely, to be fighting everything all one's time, nor to chase after every wind that blows . . . I sometimes think that the best balanced and the most *solid* of you all is Una."

"Oh, yes, dear mamma," Vicky replied. "Una is fast-rooted in the soil. Country people are always the best balanced. The only new things Una takes up are

bicycles and golf; the only old things she drops are her *g*'s. Una is eternal and sublime; there's nothing of the new woman about her, and nothing of the reactionary, either. There never was anyone less self-conscious, or less conscious of her period. All the rest of us think we're moderns, but Una knows not times; she merely swings along, her dogs at her heels, her children at her skirts, her golf-clubs over her shoulder, and always another baby on the way. And the beauty of the child! She'd make a sensation in London—though she's not the type of the moment, not elegant or artificial, too much the unsophisticated child of nature. Oh, yes, Una is on the grand scale."

"Well, your grandfather thinks even Una is too modern. It's the golf and bicycling and the *g*'s, I suppose. I suppose the fact is that it's difficult, in these days, to avoid being new. You children and your friends all are. In fact, the whole world seems to be."

"The world is always new, mamma darling, and always old. It's no newer than it was in 1880, or 1870—in fact, not so new, by some years. The only year in which it was really new was, according to grandpapa and the annotators of the Book of Genesis, B.C. 4004."

"Yes, I daresay it was sadly new then, and no doubt grandpapa would have found it so. But somehow one hears the *word* a good deal just now, used by young people as well as old. What with new women, and new art, and new literature, and new humour, and the new hedonism that Denman and Stanley talk about, and that seems to mean making your drawing-room like an old curiosity shop and burning incense in it and lighting it with darkened crimson lamps and lying on divans with black and gold cushions and smoking scented cigarettes and reading improper plays aloud. . . . Only Rome

says that isn't new in the least, but thousands of years old."

"Oh, Rome! Rome thinks nothing new. She was born blasé. She hasn't got grandpapa's or Stanley's fresh mind. She always expects the unexpected. Oscar Wilde says that to do that shows a thoroughly modern mind. If Rome had been Eve, she'd have looked at the new world through a monocle (she'd have worn that, even if nothing else) and seen that it was stale, and said with a yawn, "All this is very *vieux jeu*."

"And very possibly," said mamma, "it was."

14

FIN-DE-SIÈCLE

Ninety-three passed. In it grandpapa died, others said of influenza following on old age, but he himself would have it that it was of a shock he received one day when driving, convalescent, in Hyde Park; for his horses, very respectable and old-fashioned animals, shied at a lady bicyclist, and grandpapa's heart jolted, and when he got home he took to his bed and never rose again. So much, he whispered, hoarsely and somewhat sardonically, to his daughter, for the New Woman and her pranks. But what did it signify, he added. If he was not to get well of this attack, he was ready to go. He trusted (though a worm) in his Maker, and was not unprepared. So grandpapa, dignified to the last, departed from this life, one of the last of the Regency bucks and the Tory clerics, perhaps the last of all to condemn on theological grounds the arithmetic book of Bishop Colenso.

Fantastic observers might have imagined that, with the departure of this firm old Victorian, who had so disapproved of novelty, life span still more giddily on its rapid way. Certainly the years 1893 and 1894 do, for some reason, appear to have struck both those who gloried in novelty, and those whom it shocked, as more than usually new. The audacious experimentalism which is always with us was even more self-conscious then than is customary. Such are time's revenges that the so daring social, literary and intellectual cleavages made by our forefathers in those years are now regarded as quaintly old-fashioned compromises with freedom, even as our own audacities will doubtless be regarded thirty years hence. But the people of the nineties, even as the people of the eighties, seventies, sixties, and so back, and even as the people of the twentieth century, thought they were emancipating themselves from tradition, saw themselves as bold buccaneers sailing uncharted seas, and found it great fun. The illusion of advance is sustaining, to all right-minded persons, and should by all means be cultivated. It gives self-confidence and poise. It even seems to please elderly persons to mark or fancy changes of habit, which they have no wish to emulate, among their juniors, and it certainly pleases their juniors to be thus remarked upon, for they, too, believe that they are something new—the new young, as they have always delighted to call themselves—so all are pleased and no harm is done. The eighteen nineties were no different in this respect, from the nineteen twenties.

But 1894 does actually seem to have been a more amusing year than most that we have now. What with the New Humour, and the New Earnestness, and the New Writers, and the New Remorse, and the New

Woman, and the New Drama, and the New Journalism, and the New Child, and the New Parent, and the New Conversation, and the telephone, and the gramophone, and the new enormous sleeves, there was a great deal of novelty about.

It is a curious time to look back upon to-day. Curious to read the newspapers, reviews and comic papers of the time; to find, for instance, in the *Observer* a leading article on the last novel of Mrs. Humphry Ward, as if it were a European event, and one the next Sunday on "What is the modern girl coming to, for she opens her front door with a key?" To come, too, on reviews of Mr. Hall Caine's "Manxman," such as that by Mr. Edmund Gosse in the *St. James' Gazette*—"A contribution to literature, and the most fastidious critic would give in exchange for it a wilderness of that deciduous trash which our publishers call fiction. It is not possible to part from it without a warm tribute of approval." But how possible it has now become! Indeed, in our times it has been known that a certain author, having in an unguarded hour committed to print an appreciation of this famous writer, and then having learnt his mistake, has changed his name and started life again, unable otherwise to support his disgrace. *Autres temps, autres mœurs*. Certainly the nineties were a long time ago. Strange, too, to read some of the contemporary press comments on that innocent, well-produced, extremely well-illustrated, and on the whole capable periodical, the *Yellow Book*—"the outcry," as Mr. Arthur Symonds put it later, when the publication of the *Savoy* was greeted with much the same noise, "the outcry for no reason in the world but the human necessity for making a noise." You would think that the worst that could be said of the *Yellow*

Book was that it was not eclectic, that it opened its hospitable doors to the worse writers as well as to the better, and that its intellectually lowest contributions were too widely sundered from its highest; and the best that could be said for it (and how much this is!) is that Aubrey Beardsley drew for it, Henry James and Max Beerbohm wrote prose for it, and W. B. Yeats poetry, and that it had, on the whole, some of the more capable writers of the day as contributors. But, in point of fact, the best that was said of it was that it was brilliant, daring, courageous, new and intensely modern, and the worst that it was bizarre, revolting, affected, new and decadent. It appears to a later generation to have been none of these things; that is, it was brilliant in patches only, and commonplace in patches; it was not daring except in that it is greatly daring to publish any periodical ever; it was not more intensely modern than everything always is, and most of its contributors were middle-aged; its weak and trite contributions (though indeed it did at times sink pretty low) were too few to allow of the word revolting being properly applied to the whole magazine, even by him whom Mr. Gosse called, in another context, the most fastidious critic; and as for decadent, this it may, indeed, have been, as no one has ever discovered what, if anything, this word, as generally used at this time, meant. Exhibiting those qualities which mark the decline of a great period, it should mean: whereas many of those who survive from the nineties maintain that, on the other hand, they marked the beginning of a good period. Or it may mean merely less good than its predecessors, and this the *Yellow Book* was assuredly not, but quite the contrary. It was, in fact, not unlike various capable, well-produced periodicals of our own day. Many of

its surviving contributors contribute now to these newer journals. But how seldom does one now hear them or their writings or the periodicals to which they contribute called ultra-modern, daring, shocking, decadent or bizarre? Rather, in fact, the contrary. Thus, it will be observed, do the moderns of one day become the safe establishments of the next. In ten years the public will be saying of our present moderns, "They are safe. They are *vieux jeu*. They resemble cathedrals." What a death's head at the feast of life is this fearful fate which is suspended before even the newest of us, and which, if we survive long enough, we shall by no means avoid. Happy, possibly, were those moderns of the nineties who died with their modernity still enveloping them, so that no one shall ever call them cathedrals. Gloriously decadent, though no longer new, they shall for ever remain, and no man shall call Aubrey Beardsley respectable, established or dull, for he belonged to the Beardsley period, and, though he may be outmoded, he shall never be outrun.

15

AT THE CROFTS'

The Denman Crofts thought it was delightfully new of them to have to one of their Sunday evenings a good-looking young pickpocket and a handsome woman whose profession it was to ply for hire on the streets. The pickpocket had been captured with his hand in Stanley's pocket, and brought home to supper as an alternative to being delivered to the constabulary, for three reasons: first, he was good-looking, and masculine beauty was in fashion that year; secondly, he was a

sinner, and sins were talked of with approbation just then by the most modern literary set, particularly strange sins of divers colours, and as no one knew which sins were strange or coloured and which were plain, it might be that picking pockets was as strange and as coloured as any. Thirdly, to have a pickpocket at a Sunday evening party was New, and the other guests would be pleased and envious. The lady was there for reasons very similar, and both were a great success. Everyone treated them with friendliness and tact, so that they soon ceased to be shy, though remaining to the end a trifle puzzled and suspicious, and not very fluent in conversation. Possibly, their host suggested to Rome, they were suffering from an embarrassing attack of the New Remorse.

"Strange sinners certainly seem a little *difficile*," agreed Rome, who had been making exhausting efforts with the pickpocket, "and loose livers sometimes appear to be rather tight talkers. Your protégés cannot be said precisely to birrell."

"Anyhow, dear Denman," added a graceful young gentleman at her side, "picking pockets is a banal vice. I should scarcely call it a vice at all; it is nearly as innocent as picking cowslips on a May morning. I wish I could have procured you a lady who knelt in front of me in church yesterday afternoon while I was waiting to make my confession. She was improving the time by extracting the contents of the reticule left in the seat next her by the penitent who had gone up to her duties before her. A piquant idea, for she would get absolution almost in the moment of sinning."

"Well," said Denman, "we did the best we could at short notice. I would have preferred to have obtained a bomb-fiend. The latest vice, you know, is secreting

bombs in Hyde Park. We shall all be doing it soon. It is reported to be even more stimulating than secreting opium. There is no need, unless desired, ever to find the bombs again, still less to use them; that is an extension of the vice, only practised by those who wish to qualify as extremists, or bomb-fiends. The ordinary victims of the bomb habit merely secrete; they make a cache, and store away bombs as squirrels' nuts. A pretty habit, but ceasing by now even to be strange. It is deplorable how the best vices become vulgarised. Rome, will you join me in a bomb-secreting orgy to-morrow at dusk?"

"By all means, Denman. It would restore my spirits. I have been sadly depressed lately by reading in one week Sarah Grand, 'A Yellow Aster,' 'Marcella,' 'The Manxman,' and Mr. Zangwill and Mrs. Lynn Linton in the *New Review* on 'What Women Should Know.' There is no more spirit in me. Though I was a little revived by the 'Green Carnation.' An entrancing work, about all of us. But really entertaining."

"Why such a desperate orgy of literature? I thought you were of a more fastidious habit—not like Stanley, who insists on reading everything, even 'Discords' and the Dreyfus case. I can seldom read any novels. I find their reviews enough, if not too much. I read of 'The Manxman' that it would be read and re-read by many thousands with human tears and human laughter, and that settled 'The Manxman.' Where do reviewers get their inimitably delicious phrases from? And if one asked them with the tears and laughter of what animal other than the human animal could human beings read, or even re-read, a book, how would they reply? Perhaps in the same way that old Meredith did the other day when Dick Le Gallienne asked him to give

the public a few words to explain his peculiar style. 'Posterity will still be explaining me, long after I am dead. Why, then, should I forestal their labours?' "

"I wonder," Rome mused, "if posterity will really be so diligent and so intelligent as their ancestors seem to think. People always say they write for posterity when they are not appreciated at the moment. They seem to imagine posterity as a smug and spectacled best scholar, spending its time delving among the chronicles of wasted years in the reading-room of the British Museum, and hailing with rapture the literary efforts of their ancestors."

"Whereas I," said Denman, "see posterity as a leaping savage, enjoying nameless orgies among the ruins of our civilisation, but not enjoying literature. Possibly, even, there will be no posterity. The débâcle of our civilisation—and it's obviously too good to last—may mean the débâcle of the world itself. I hope so. *A bas le* posterity, I say. Who wants it? I scorn to write for it, or to plant horrible little baby trees for it, or to suck up to it in any way whatsoever. Crude and uncultured savage. *Vive l'aujourd'hui!*"

"And I," said Rome, "see posterity as a being precisely like ourselves. It will read every morning in its newspapers, just as we do, that our relations with France are strained, that so many people have been murdered, born, divorced, married, that such and such a war is in progress, that such and such a law has been passed, or speech made, or book published, and it will know, just as we do, that none of it matters in the least. . . . I've no grudge against posterity. Let it have its little day."

"It will," said the graceful young man, with gloom. "I can't share Denman's faith in the approaching anni-

hilation of humanity. Humanity in general is much too bourgeois and uninteresting to do anything but increase greatly and keep the earth replenished. It is impossible to imagine that the gods love it. *We* shall perish; we, the fine exotic flower of an effete civilisation—(by the way, how exquisitely lovely and innocently wicked Lady Pember looks to-night; she, not the cow-like young woman talking to Mrs. Croft ought to be the strange scarlet—or is it mauve—sinner)—but we are a small minority. The majority, which hasn't even the art of gracefully fading out, will heavily continue. It is thus that I picture posterity—a ponderous suburban bourgeois in mutton-chop whiskers or tight stays, sniffing at our poetry, our wit and our *Yellow Book*, and saying, 'How decadent they were in the nineties!' By the way, what does decadent mean? I always understood that man fell once and for all, long ago, and could not therefore be falling still. I prefer deciduous. How deliciously it slides round the tongue, like an over-ripe peach. I wonder it is not more used in verse. To me it suggests a creamy green absinthe, or a long, close kiss on moist, coral-pink lips. Disgusting. I detest moist lips, and absinthe makes me feel sick, though I try and pretend it doesn't."

Stanley, charming and smiling, with her pleasant round, brown face, lively deep blue eye, and enormous box sleeve, darted across the room to them.

"Den, we *must* remove our strange sinners now. I'm worn out with them. They'll neither of them say more than yes, no, and eh, and they've both drunk too much already, and keeping one eye on Mr. Sykes lest he get too near people's pockets and the other on the lady lest she get hold of more whiskey, is too heavy a respon-

sibility. You must take them away. And then Lady Pember wants to talk to you, darling."

Denman gave her a queer, quick look out of his narrow, smiling eyes, as he turned away.

"And Rome, love, I want to bring Aubrey Beardsley to you. He is being assaulted by Miss Carruthers, who has been reading 'Marcella,' 'Our Manifold Nature,' by Sarah Grand, and the newspapers, and wants to know what he thinks of the Emancipation of Women, the Double Standard of Morality, and the approaching death of Mr. Froude. Poor Aubrey has never thought of any of them; he takes no interest in emancipations, and his taste in women is most reactionary—anyone could tell that, from the ladies he draws; he thinks any other kind most unwholesome; he never reads protestant historians; and he has never thought about even a single standard of morality. Double standard, indeed! As if there weren't as many standards as there are people."

"Not nearly, Mrs. Croft, fortunately. I'm sure Aubrey himself can't contribute one; nor can I. But it is stupid of Aubrey not to read poor Mr. Froude. He is such a noble and happy liar. He really does practise lying for lying's sake—not like Macaulay, mere utilitarian lying, for principle's sake, though he does some of that too. Froude is an artist. He will be missed, even though he is a protestant. He hates accuracy with as much passion as the good popes hated thought, as Oscar Wilde says somewhere à propos of something else. (Oscar's grammar is so often loose.) How right both Mr. Froude and the good popes are! Look at Denman being firm with the sinners; how delightfully he does it; he would make a good prison warder."

"The sinners," said Miss Garden, regarding them

through her monocle, "certainly are rather strange. I am afraid they have both drunk to excess. There, now he has piloted them safely to the door; that is a relief. Yes, Stanley, do fetch me Mr. Beardsley. Will he shock me to-night? I was told that the other evening he shocked his table at the Café Royal to death by his talk. John Lane had to remove him. It is possible to go too far even for the Café Royal, and he did it. I suppose that is why he is looking so elated to-night, like Alexander seeking fresh worlds to conquer. 'He shocked the Café Royal.' What an epitaph! On the other hand, I hear that he was shocked himself the other day. Mr. Henley did it, in bluff mood, at a party at the Pennells'. How do you do, Mr. Beardsley?"

16

DIVORCE AT THE CROFTS'

It did not last, the Crofts' marriage. In the spring of '95, Stanley wearied of her husband's infidelities, and could not bear them any more. As to Denman, he felt often, though he loved her, that he had married a young woman who had her tiresome aspects; she was a feminist, a prig, she tried to write, and badly at that, she was still over-much concerned with public affairs, with committees, with the emancipation (save the mark!) of women. And she was for ever fussing over the children, who should be treated as amusing toys. He loved her, but she tried him often. She was strident, obstinate, stupidly in earnest about things that seemed to him to demand a light indifference; then, cumbrously, she would try to adopt his tone, and fail. Marriage. Well, it presented great difficulties. He

sighed sometimes for the freedom of his bachelor days. Meanwhile, life had its moments, exquisite, fleeting, frail. And at these Stanley, who was not really stupid, guessed quite accurately, and was stabbed by each afresh until her very life-blood seemed to drain away, leaving her, so she felt, a helpless ghost of a woman, without assurance, heart or power to go on, but only her stabbed love and a proud, burning rage. And, in the spring of '95, she broached this matter of divorce.

He asked her forgiveness.

"I can't help it, Stanley. I suppose it's the way I'm made. . . . The queer thing is, I've loved you all the time. You can't understand that. Women are so—so monogamous."

"That old cliché, Den! It isn't clever enough for you. Some men are monogamous. Some men couldn't love several women at the same time. And some women can. . . . I'm dead sick of it, anyhow. All this beastly philandering. It's merely trivial. It *means* nothing. It's turning life and love into a parlour game. Do you take nothing seriously, Denman—not your relations with people, or with love, or with life—not even your fatherhood?"

"Oh, don't preach at me. I'm a waster, if you like, and let's leave it at that. . . . I'm damnably sorry for everything, of course. . . . But you're not altogether and always easy to live with, you know. All this stuff about women, for instance . . . you know how I hate it . . ."

"You know how I hate *your* stuff about women, if we are to drag in that now. . . . Oh, Den, don't let's be childish. What does all that matter now? We're up against a much bigger thing than a difference of opinion about the suffrage."

"You can't forgive me, of course. And I suppose you're justified."

"Oh, I suppose I could forgive you. I could forgive you anything, perhaps. I have before, after all. But I think I had better not, for all our sakes. You'd rather be free, wouldn't you? Oh, you needn't answer. I know you'd rather be free. I don't suspect you of wanting to live permanently with Alice Pember, or with anyone else; you just want to be free and irresponsible, and make love to whom you like. Well, you shall. I shan't keep you. You're not meant for a husband and father, and you've tired yourself long enough trying to be one. You can drop it now."

"I suppose you're right, from your point of view. You'd better divorce me. . . . I'm terribly sorry, Stan. We were so tremendously happy once."

"Don't." Stanley caught her breath and sharply bit her lip. "You've no right to talk of that. That's all past. We've not been happy for a long time now. . . . And you know you despise me and think me a fool. . . . Oh, what's the use of talking? . . ."

Three days later Stanley, with her son and daughter, aged four and two, left her husband's house and took up her temporary abode with her parents, while her divorce suit slowly prepared itself.

"Divorce is damnable," Stanley said to Rome. "Why should people be penalised by having to go through this ghastly business, with all its loathsome publicity, merely because they wish to annul a private contract which only concerns themselves? Why shouldn't they be able to go to a lawyer together and say, 'Annul this contract,' as with any other contract? Instead of which, if it's even suspected that they *both* want it annulled, they're not allowed to do it at all; and if it's the wife

who wants it, they have to fake up this ridiculous cruelty-or-desertion business. And, above all, why should we be gibbeted in the newspapers for doing a purely private piece of legal business? Why, in the name of decency and common-sense, should a thing become public news merely because it occurs in a law-court? And is our whole English constitution and system so rotten because we are rotten, or aren't our laws a long way behind public opinion? . . . Sometimes I think I can't go through with it, it's all so beastly, but that we'll just live apart without a divorce. But I know that wouldn't do. There's got to be something desperately final between Denman and me, or we might be coming together again, when he's tired of Alice Pember. I love him so much, beneath everything, that if he wanted to I probably should. And I know it would be no use. We should make nothing of it now. It would be bad for both of us, and worse for Billy and Molly. And it would all happen again. No, it's got to be a clean cut, even if the imbecile state only allows us to have it on these disgusting terms. . . . Sometimes, Rome, I think the whole world and its laws and systems and conventions is just a lunatic asylum."

"I've always known that, my dear. What else should it be?"

"Rome, how does one bear it?"

Stanley, whose way it was to express her joys and griefs—she was not self-contained, like Rome—was pacing up and down the room, her hands clenched behind her, her cheeks flushed with feverish, waking nights, her eyes heavy under sullen brows.

"I hardly know," Rome answered her, gently. "I hardly know. But, somehow, one goes on, and one learns to be amused again. . . . I am hoping that when

one is elderly one will mind less. You *will* mind less, Stanley, in a few years. Life's so strong, it carries one on all the time to new things. Particularly, I think, you, because you are so alive. You'll come through even this desperate business."

Stanley said, "Life's broken to bits. I was so happy once. . . . Broken to jagged bits," and left the room to cry. For, contrary to a common belief, those who feel most usually cry most too. Stanley was afraid that she was contracting a tearful habit such as she might never outgrow, but she did not much care. She did not much care for anything in these days.

She missed Denman. Missing him was like the continual sharp ache of a gathered tooth. She missed his charm, his brilliance, his love, his careless, casual ways, his intense life, his soft, husky voice, the smile on his queer white face and narrow eyes. She missed his gay, youthful talk, the parties and plays they had been used to go to together, his constant presence in the house. She would wake in the nights, thinking he lay beside her, and that his arm would be thrown, in a half waking caress, across her; but he was not there. She would wake in the mornings, thinking to see his rumpled brown head sunk in the pillow beside hers; but there was no head and no pillow but her own. When her son and daughter entered her room in the morning and climbed upon her bed, after the irritating manner of infants, and woke her by pulling at her two dark plaits, she would open drowsy eyes that looked for her husband's short, delightful face smiling above her; but there were only the two young children, with their restless antics and imbecile prattlings. Fatuous beings! One day she would enjoy them again, antics, fatuity and all, even as she had enjoyed them before, but in these days

her love for them lay frozen and almost lifeless, with all other love but that one love that tore at her heart with fierce, clawing fingers. It seemed that this love and this anguish consumed her wholly, leaving nothing over. She had never been first a mother; she had been first an individual, a human creature sensitively reacting to all the contacts of the engrossing world, and secondly she had been a wife, a woman who loved a man. A mother, perhaps, third. And now the secondary function, in its death agony, had taken entire possession, and she was no longer either an individual creature or a mother, but only a lover who had lost all.

To tear him out of her heart—that was her constant object. And if the heart (since we are, by foolish custom, so impelled to call the seat of the affections) had been alone involved, she might have done so. But who should tear the beloved from the roots he had in her whole daily life for five years, from his place in her mind, her brain, her body, her whole being? She knew him for a philanderer, a trivial taster in love and life; selfish, spoilt, vain, with idiotic opinions about one half of the human race. It was, indeed, her knowledge of all this in him that informed her brain that their separation must be final and complete. But, with it all, she could not tear him from her heart, her soul, her body, her entire and constant life. He was herself, and she herself was being torn in two.

Life was a continual anguish. She saw that she must leave her parents' home and live alone. She was bringing misery into Bloomsbury Square. And daily, night and morning, her parents kissed her, and their kisses were to her, who craved so bitterly those kisses that she might no longer have, a continual reminder and torment. She was trying to shut off that side of life, but

they did not understand, and kissed her. Rome, who understood too well, did not kiss her. She knew that she must be alone with her children, that she was no fit housemate for a loving family or friends. So, presently, she went into rooms, and this was a more bearable loneliness.

But it left more time on her hands; more time in which to brood on life, on love, on illusion, on women and on men. How had she failed in this job of marriage, of constructing an enduring life with a man she had loved, who had loved her? How had they both failed? How frequent was this failure! It seemed that love was not enough. Such deep misunderstandings prevail, between any two human beings. Sex bridges many of them, but not all. Stanley began, at this time, to generalise dangerously and inaccurately (since all such generalisations are inaccurate) about women and about men. She saw women as eager, restless, nervous children, chattering, discussing, joking, turning the world upside down together while they smoked or brushed their hair, and all to so little purpose. Meanwhile there were men; the sex; sphinx-like, placid, inscrutable, practical, doing the next thing, gently smiling at the fuss women made about ideas. Men knew that they did not matter, these excitements and fusses of women, any more than the toys children play with matter. They dismissed them with that serene smile of theirs, and busied themselves with the elemental, enduring things: sex, fatherhood, work. They knew what mattered; they went for the essentials. They didn't waste their time frothing about with words and ideas. Men were somehow admirable, in their strong stability. Their nervous systems were so magnificent. They could kill animals without feeling sick, break the

necks of fishes, put worms on hooks, shoot rabbits and birds, jab bayonets into bodies. Women would never amount to much in this world, because they nearly all have a nervous disease; they are strung on wires; they are like children frightened of the dark and excited by the day. It seems fundamental, this difference between the nerves of most women and most men. You see it among little girls and boys; most little boys, but how few little girls, can squash insects and kill rabbits without a qualm. It is this difference which gives even a stupid man often a greater mastery over life than a clever woman. He is not frightened by life. Women, for the most part, are. Life may be a joke to them, but it is often also a nightmare. To the average man it is neither. Men are marvellously restful. Eternal symbols of parenthood and the stability of life, to which women come back, as to strong towers of refuge, after their excursions and alarms.

This was the kind of nonsense which Stanley wove to herself during these unbalanced days of her life. Nonsense, because all generalities about human beings are nonsense. But many people, including Stanley, find interest in making them up, and it is a harmless game.

17

PANTA REI

It seemed to Stanley, through this spring and summer of 1895, that a phase was over, not only in her own life, which was apt so faithfully to mirror the fleeting times, but in the world at large. That literary, artistic and social movement so vaguely described as "decadent" by those who could scarcely define that or

any other word, nor would greatly care to if they could, seemed to be on the wane. The trial and conviction of Mr. Oscar Wilde did it no good, and the many who had been unjust towards the movement before became unjuster still, adopting an "I told you so" air, which mattered as little as any other air adopted by those of like mentality, but which had, nevertheless, its effect on strengthening the forces of so-called healthy philistines in the land. As a contemporary poet sang:

"If these be artists, then may Philistines
Arise, plain sturdy Britons as of yore,
And sweep them off, and purge away the signs
That England e'er such noxious offspring bore."

Even the anti-Philistines, the so-called decadents themselves, were disconcerted and shaken by this public débâcle of one of the most prominent of their number. "Those who write, draw and talk in this clever new manner that we have never liked," said the Philistines, firmly assured, "are obviously as unpleasant as, even more unpleasant than, we have believed." "They might as well say," said the practisers of the elegant, clever new manner, "that because Ladas, owned by a Liberal leader, won the Derby last year, all Liberals are as intelligent about horses, even more intelligent about horses than they have believed. They might as well say . . ." But it is of no use to tell people of this mentality what they might as well say. They will as likely as not proceed to say it, and it is very certain that they will not therefrom see the absurdity of that which they have already said. There is, in fact, no way of dealing with these persons; they are the world's masters, laying the ponderous weight of their foolish and heavy minds upon all subtleties, delicacies and dis-

criminations to flatten them, talking very loudly, firmly and fatuously the while through their hats, and through their mouthpiece, the press. There is no dealing with them; it is they who make England, and indeed the world, what it is. "This nation believes . . ." "The people of this country have always held . . ." says the press, grandly, as if indeed *that* made it any more likely to be true, instead of far less. "This asylum has always believed that the best form of government is a party system," the newspapers published in asylums no doubt continually remark. "The inhabitants of this asylum have always said . . ."

And so much for public opinion.

Anyhow, from whatever cause, there began at this time, to put it briefly, a slump in decadence. Max Nordau wrote this year, with his customary exaggeration, his essay on "*Fin-de-siècle*."

"An epoch of history is unmistakably in its decline, and another is approaching its birth. There is a sound of rending in every tradition, and it is as though the morrow could not link itself with to-day. Things as they are totter and plunge, and they are suffered to reel and fall because man is weary, and there is no faith that it is worth an effort to uphold them. Views that have hitherto governed minds are dead or driven hence like disenthroned kings. Meanwhile interregnum, in all its terror, prevails. . . . Such is the spectacle presented by the doings of men in the reddened light of the Dusk of the Nations."

Max Nordau was a man of imagination, and had an excessive way of putting things, and seems to have been hypnotised by the arbitrary divisions into which man has chopped time; but, whatever he may have meant, it is quite true that no period is precisely like

another, and that life is, as has been well said, a flux. In brief, *panta rei*, and no less in the middle nineties than at other times.

18

RELIGION

Of the many impulsions that drive human beings to one form or another of religion, the strongest, perhaps, is pain. The other impulsions—conscience, the mystic sense, personal influence, conviction, experimentalism, loneliness, boredom, remorse, and so forth—all work powerfully on their respective subjects. But pain, mental anguish so great that human nature is driven by it from cover to cover, seeking refuge and finding none, is the most powerful and the most frequent agent for the churches. “There is no help for me in this world,” tortured human creatures cry, and are often driven by that cry to questioning whether there may not, perhaps, be help in some other. Anyhow, they think, it is worth the experiment, and the experiment proves an anodyne and a gate of escape from what could scarcely, otherwise, be borne.

Such was Stanley Croft’s method of approach to a closer contact with religion than any she had had before, though, before her marriage, she had had a mystical belief in God, which had, during the last five years, all but died out in an atmosphere not well suited to it. Now it returned to her again, touched with just enough remorse for past neglect as might serve for a temperate shadow of that hectic and enjoyable repentance which drove, then and later, so many of her literary contemporaries into the fold of the Catholic Church. In reality, perhaps, though it seemed that pain was her

immediate impeller, it was ultimately, as usual, the spirit of her age which seized her and drove her to prayer.

She would turn into dark and silent churches, seeking desperately the relief from herself that life denied her, and fall on her knees and there stay, numb and helpless, her forehead dropped on her arms, till the sweet, often incense-laden atmosphere (for that was the kind of church she preferred) enveloped her like a warm and healing garment, and she whispered into the dim silence, "God! God! If you are there, speak to me and help me! God! God! God!"

From that cry, for long the only prayer she could utter, other prayers at last grew. The silence melted round her and became a living thing; the red sanctuary lamp was as the light of God flaming in a dim world, a light shining in darkness, and the darkness encompassed it not. The undefeated life of God, burning like a brave star in a stormy night, by which broken, all but foundered ships might steer. It was so that Stanley saw it, and slowly it did actually guide her to a kind of painful peace.

"I wish the poor child would join the true Church," Mr. Garden said to Mrs. Garden, for he was still, though now a little dubiously, a member of that church. "I think it would help her."

Mamma looked sceptical.

"I think not, Aubrey. She doesn't want to be bothered with joining churches just now, and she certainly has no energy to give to it. Besides, she likes English Catholicism. It has, you must admit, rather more liberty of thought than your branch." (Mamma knew, having tried both more than once.) "Besides," she added, quickly, to change the subject from liberty of

thought, which always in these days made papa look sad—in fact, she had mentioned it in a moment of carelessness which she immediately regretted—“besides, there is the divorce.”

Papa sighed and looked sadder than ever.

“Yes. This horrid, this distressing business. I wish she may give it up before it is too late. Even High Anglicanism does not allow divorce.”

“On that point,” said mamma, “and, I fancy, on a good many others, Stanley does not agree with High Anglicanism. Fortunately that does not prevent her from finding comfort in its forms of worship. I am only thankful that she can. It is hard for those in trouble who have no faith in another world.” Possibly her mind had turned to Rome, whose faith in worlds, either this we live in or any other, was negligible.

But papa’s mind was turned inward, upon his own torn soul. Mamma watched him with experienced anxiety. She knew the signs, and feared that the Mother of the Churches would not for long hold papa in her firm arms. Dear Aubrey; he was so restless. And he had lately been reading a lot of odd, mystic books. . . .

19

CELTIC TWILIGHT

It was very certain that Stanley would not join the Roman Church. She had too mystic an imagination to enter any body so definite and sharp of doctrine. She was more at one at this time with the Celtic poets, with their opening of strange gates onto dim magic lands. The loveliness, like the wavering, lovely rhythms of the sea, of W. B. Yeats, took her, as it took her whole

generation, by storm; the tired twilight sadness of Fiona Macleod was balm to her.

*"O years with tears, and tears through weary years,
How weary I, who in your arms have lain;
Now I am tired: the sound of slipping spears
Moves soft, and tears fall in a bloody rain,
And the chill footless years go over me, who am slain.*

*I hear, as in a wood dim with old light, the rain
Slow falling; old, old weary human tears,
And in the deepening dusk my comfort is my pain,
Sole comfort left of all my hopes and fears,
Pain that alone survives, gaunt hound of the shadowy
years."*

And

*"Between the grey pastures and the dark wood
A valley of white poppies is lit by the low moon,
It is the grave of dreams, a holy rood.*

*It is quiet there: no wind doth ever fall.
Long, long ago a wind sang once a heart-sweet rune.
Now the white poppies grow, silent and tall.*

*A white bird floats there like a drifting leaf:
It feeds upon faint sweet hopes and perishing dreams,
And the still breath of unremembering grief.*

*And as a silent leaf the white bird passes,
Winnowing the dusk by dim, forgetful streams.
I am alone now among the silent grasses."*

In such soft and melancholy enchantment as this Stanley's desolation found, for a time, comfort.

(Vicky's Imogen, aged seven, found this book at her grandparents' house one day, opened it, read, breathing noisily for excitement, and tucked it furtively away in the pouch of her sailor frock, where she often kept

rabbits, or eggs for hatching. She bore it home undiscovered, and spent the evening lying on her stomach and elbows beneath the nursery table reading it, with moving lips and fingers in her ears, deaf to the clamour and summons of her brethren, until at last she was haled to bed, hot-cheeked and wet-eyed, silent upon a peak in Darien. She had found a new enchantment; it was better than Mowgli, even. But, since she was not really a dishonest little girl, when next she went to Bloomsbury Square she slipped the book unobtrusively back into the shelf from which she had stolen it, and took "The Manxman" instead, thinking, with the fatuity of her years, to find that it concerned a tailless cat; but with regard to this book she was disappointed, and unable to agree with Mr. Gosse.)

20

THE STAR IN THE EAST

Strange books and pamphlets littered papa's study table. He met and dined with Mr. George Russell (the Irish poet, not the English Churchman). He admired and liked Mr. Russell so much that for his sake he attended the lectures of Madame Blavatsky, and perused the works of Colonel Olcott, W. Q. Judge and Mrs. Besant. A feeling of expansion took him, as if the bands of rigid orthodoxy, which had restrained him for the last nine years, were being forced asunder. . . . It was, with papa, the eternally recurrent spring-time of his soul's re-birth; he was in travail with a new set of ideas, and their pressure rent him cruelly. Then one day, "I have seen his star in the east," cried papa, and became a Theosophist.

He wanted to lead Stanley also to Buddha (mamma said firmly that she herself was too old), but Stanley would have none of it. To change your religion you need a certain vitality, an energy of mind and will, an alertness towards fresh ideas, and Stanley at this time had little of these things. She clung to a desperate and passionate faith, as a drowning man to a raft; gradually she even came to take pleasure in services, and would find at the early mass at St. Alban's, Holborn, an exalted, mystic, half sensuous joy. But she was in no mood to choose and investigate a new creed. Besides, Theosophy. . . .

However, papa enjoyed it. Papa was now sixty-five years of age, but his feeling for religions had not waned. Mamma, who had been a little afraid that papa might next be a Jew (for he had been writing a monograph on the Hebrew prophets, whom he greatly admired, and also seeing a good deal of Mr. Zangwill), was on the whole relieved. For a long time papa had not been happy in the Roman Catholic Church, finding many of the papal bulls difficult of digestion, and the doctrines of hell-fire and transubstantiation (as interpreted by most of the priesthood) painfully materialistic; neither was he happy about the attitude of the Church towards M. Loisy and other modernists.

So, when he saw the star in the east, he set out for it with a sigh of relief.

21

IRVING

While papa followed the star, and Stanley doggedly and bitterly sued her husband for restitution of conjugal rights, and Rome urbanely surveyed the world

through a monocle and drove elegantly in hansoms, often with an enormous wolfhound or a couple of poms, and Maurice fired squibs of angry eloquence at everything that came into his line of vision, their brother Irving made a fortune by speculating in South African gold mine shares. Irving, as has been said earlier, was a lucky young man, whom God had fashioned for prosperity. Having made his fortune, he married a handsome, agreeable and healthy young woman, one Lady Marjorie Banister, the daughter of an obscure north-country earl, and settled down to make more.

It was an epoch of fortune-making. Mr. Cecil Rhodes loomed in the south, an encouraging and stimulating figure to those who had enterprise and a little capital. The new rich were filling Mayfair, making it hum with prosperity. Irving too hummed with prosperity, and took a house in Cumberland Place. He found life an excellent affair, though he had his grievances, one of which was that motor cars were not allowed on English roads without a man walking with a flag before them. "We are a backward nation," Irving grumbled, after visits to Paris, as so many have grumbled before and since. But, on the whole, Irving approved of modern life. He thought Maurice, who did not, a bear with a sore head.

Maurice was now the editor of an intelligent but acid weekly paper, which carried on a running fight with the government, the opposition, all foreign governments, the British public, most current literature, nearly all current ideas, and the bulk of the press, particularly Henley's *New Review*, which boomed against him monthly. Having a combatant spirit, he found life not unenjoyable, now that he had become so used and so indifferent to his wife as to have acquired armour

against the bitter chafing she had caused him of yore, and to find some domestic pleasure in annoying her. He considered it a low and imbecile world, but to that too one gets used, and a weekly paper is, as many have found, a gratifying vent for scorn. Saturday after Saturday, through 1895, the *Gadfly* railed at the unsatisfactory attitude of our Colonial Secretary towards South Africa, the existence of Mr. Cecil Rhodes and the British South Africa Company, the tepid and laissez-faire temperament of Lord Rosebery, the shocking weather, the absurd inhibitions against motor cars, the vulgarity of the cheaper press, the futility of the controversies on education, the slowness of progress in developing Röntgen Rays and flying machines, the immense wealth made by the undeserving in cycle companies and gold mines, the smugness of Liberals, the inanity of Tories, the ignorance of the Labour Party, the blatancy of current forms of patriotism, the arrogance of the victory-swollen Japanese, the bad manners of France, the aggressiveness of Germany, the feebleness of current literature, and so on and so forth.

"That's right, old smiler, keep it up. That's the stuff to give them," Irving amiably encouraged him, as he and his wife ate at the dinner table of his brother. "*They* don't mind, and it makes you happy. But what's bitten you to set you against company promoters? I didn't care for your column about them last week. They've done you no harm, have they? The fact is, I was going to ask you if you'd care to come in to a small affair I'm helping to float. Bicycle bolts are a back number, and that's a fact. In November next year the red flag comes off, and motor cars begin in earnest all over the roads. Amberley and I are specialising in tyres. We've got Lord Mortlake in too.

It's a sure thing. We shall be coining thousands in a couple of years. You'd better come in early. Am I right?"

Amy's mirth chimed like sweet bells.

"Motor cars! Oh, I do like that! Why not flying machines at once?"

Irving regarded her with tolerant scorn.

"Why not, indeed? You may well ask. But for the moment motor cars will do us. I daresay it will be fliers in ten years or so. And moving photographs too. I'm not, you see, a pessimist, like poor dear Maurice. I believe in Progress. And in Capital. And in the Future of the Race. And in getting rich quick. Maurice, am I right?"

"Probably," said Maurice. "You're certainly not bad at getting rich quick; I'll say that for you. But I am. So, on the whole . . ."

"Motor car tyres!" Amy still jeered, being of those who obtain one idea at a time and grapple it to their souls with hoops of steel. "Motor car tyres! They won't wear out many tyres trundling away behind those old chaps with the flags."

Maurice finished his sentence otherwise than he had intended.

"On the whole I'm inclined to take shares in this company of yours. Send me along the details as soon as you can."

Amy's utterances often had this subversive effect on his own. He threw her a malevolent glance, and poured himself out some more claret.

Amy put up her pretty, dark eyebrows. She pursed her mouth. She nodded.

"That's right. Throw our money away. Don't bother a bit about me or the children."

"Now, Amy, don't nag him. I'm answerable for this little show, and I can tell you I'm right. Remember I told him to put his shirt on Persimmon. Well, he didn't. You know the results. I don't want to brag, but—well, there it is. Maurice, I think better of your wits than I have for the last ten years."

Maurice, sipping his claret, still kept his sardonic gaze on his wife, who rose and took Irving's wife to another room. Often Amy wished that she had chanced to marry Irving instead of Maurice, though he was too young for her. Oftener Maurice wished that he had married no one, for marriage was oppressive.

22

RULE BRITANNIA

'95 swept on, and speeded up to a riotous finish, with the British South African troops, under the imprudent Dr. Jameson, galloping over the Transvaal Border to protect the British of the Rand. Loud applause from the British Isles. In the legal language of the Bow Street trial that followed, "certain persons, in the month of December, 1895, in South Africa, within Her Majesty's dominions, and without licence of Her Majesty, did unlawfully prepare a military expedition to proceed against the dominions of a certain friendly State, to wit the South African Republic, contrary to the provisions of the Foreign Enlistment Act." In the more poetic language of the Laureate,—

"Wrong, is it wrong? Well, maybe,
But I'm going, boys, all the same:
Do they think me a burgher's baby,
To be scared by a prating name?"

In the episcopal language of the Bishop of Mashonaland, "Whether the English people liked the exploits of Dr. Jameson or not, the Empire had been built up by such men. They had a Colonial Secretary with his eyes open, who could see further than most people thought. Africa must take a foremost place in the Empire, and the Church should go hand in hand with its development."

And, in the journalistic language of the *Daily Mail* (born early in '96, and, like other new-born infants, both noisy and pink), "It is well known in official circles that England and the Transvaal must eventually come into collision."

Vicky's children, in a fever of martial jingoism, temporarily abandoned the Sherlock Holmes crime-tracking exploits which were engaging their attention those Christmas holidays, for the Jameson Raid, riding bestridden chairs furiously round the schoolroom, chanting,

"Then over the Transvaal border,
And a gallop for life or death—"

until two chairs broke into pieces and Imogen, thrown, cut her head on the fender, and the game was forbidden by authority.

The adventure of the raid tickled up British imperialism, which, like the imperialism in Vicky's schoolroom, began to ride merrily for a fall. '96 dawned on a country growing drunk with pride of race and possessions; working up, in fact, for the Diamond Jubilee. Dr. Jameson and his confederates were received with the cheers of the populace and the adoration of the *Daily Mail*, and sentenced to short terms of imprisonment.

Soon after the birth of the *Daily Mail* came the *Savoy*, the last stand of eclectic æstheticism. Stanley Croft had, for a while, an odd feeling of standing hesitant between two forces, one of which was loosening its grasp on her, the other taking hold. The newer force conquered, and she was carried, step by step, from æstheticism to imperialism, from belief in art and intellect to belief in the dominance of the British race over the world. She read Henley and Kipling. She found pride in,

“Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul. . . .”

Her religion ceased to be a mystic twilight passion. A renascence of sturdy courage took her back into the common ways, where, her divorce now accomplished, she pursued her old aims. She took up life, and became alert to the world again, responsive, like a ship in full sail, to every wind that blew. And the wind that blew on her was a wind of reaction from her recent past, and it drove her out on the seas of ambitious imperialism, so that love of country became in her, as in so many, a kind of swaggering tribal pride. The romance of Greater Britain took her by storm. Not the infant Imogen, stirred to tears by the swinging by of red-coated troops to a band, seethed with a more exalted jingoism. Glory, adventure, pride of race, and the clash of arms—what stimulating dreams were these, and how primeval their claim upon the soul! While Stanley’s friends shrugged cynical shoulders over Dr. Jim’s exploit and the attitude towards it of the great British public, while her papa gravely misdoubted such

militant aggression, while Maurice sneered and tilted at it in a weekly column, while Rome contemplated the spectacle with the detached, intelligent amusement of the blasé but interested theatre-goer, while Irving, cynically approving, said, "That's good," thinking of the Rand gold, and Mr. Cecil Rhodes observed that his friend the doctor had upset the apple-cart—while all these made the comments natural to their tastes, temperaments and points of view, Stanley, like a martial little girl, flew high the flag of "Britain for ever! Up the Rand!" and her spirit marched as to a military band.

Vicky also, in her more careless and casual way, was a supporter of Empire. "Whatever Charles and Maurice and all those informed people may say, my dear, this Dr. Jim is a gallant creature, dashing off to the rescue of his fellow countrymen and countrywomen like that. For, even if they weren't in actual danger, they *were* inconvenienced, those poor tiresome Uitlanders. And how dreadful to be governed by Boers! What people! Canting, Old Testament humbugs! One dislikes them so excessively, even from here, that one can imagine the feelings of those who live among them. Even Maurice isn't so perverse as to maintain that Boers are tolerable. Oh, I'm all for Dr. Jim. I insist on taking in that cheery pink new daily that pets him as if he were a Newfoundland dog that has saved a boat-load of drowning people. Such a bright, pleased tone it has. 'The British Public know a good man when they see one,' it says. So much more amiable and pleasant an attitude towards us than Maurice's 'The public be damned. All it knows about anything that matters would go into a walnut shell and then rattle.' Maurice gets so terribly contemptuous and conceited.

I tremble to think what he will be like at sixty, should nature keep him alive, if he finds the world so silly when he is but thirty-eight. Perhaps, however, he will have mellowed."

23

MAURICE, ROME, STANLEY AND THE QUEEN

'96 ran out. Irving's tyre company began to make money, and Maurice grew richer. He sent Amy to the Riviera for the winter, and Rome kept his house for him. He was sweeter-tempered than usual. Rome was, in his eyes, a *flâneuse* and a dilettante of life, but her clear, cynical mind was agreeable to him. Her intelligent mockery was, after Amy's primitive jeering, as caviare after rotten eggs. God! If only Amy need never come back. But she would inevitably come back. And the children loved her. Children are like that; no discrimination. They loved Maurice too, but more mildly. And, very temperately, they liked their Aunt Rome, whom they often suspected of making fun of them, and, even oftener, of being completely bored. In point of fact, Rome was apt to be bored by persons under sixteen or so. She allowed childhood to be a necessary stage in the growth of human beings, but she found it a tiresome one, and saw no reason why children should consort with adults. Stanley, on the other hand, being by now partially restored to her general goodwill towards humanity, threw herself ardently into the society and interests of her own children and those of others. She taught them imperialism, and about the English flag, and told them adventure stories, and played with them the games suitable to their years. She told them about the Diamond Jubilee,

the great event of '97, and how our good, wise and aged queen would, by next June, have reigned for sixty years. Victoria was in fashion just then. She was well thought of, both morally and intellectually. "To the ripe sagacity of the politician," said the loyal press, "she adds the wide knowledge acquired by sixty years of statesmanship. Many a strained international situation has been saved by her personal tact." That was the way the late nineteenth century press spoke of Victoria, the English being a loyal people, with a strong sense of royalty. So the Diamond Jubilee would be a great day for the Queen. Since the last Jubilee, in '87, the Empire, or anyhow the sense of Empire, had grown and developed. Imperialism was now a very heady wine, to those who liked that tippie. To others, such as Maurice Garden, it was more of an emetic.

24

NANSEN IN THE ALBERT HALL

Dr. Nansen came to London early in '97. Whatever else you thought of anything or anyone, you had to admire Dr. Nansen. He addressed thousands of people in the Albert Hall. Vicky took her children to hear him. Already they had read "Farthest North." Imogen, at eight years old, had read it, absorbed, breathless, intent, tongue clenched between teeth. The man who had sailed through ice, and all but got to the Pole. He was better than soldiers. As good, almost, as sailors. What a man! And there he stood, a giant dwarfed to smallness on the platform of the vast hall, a Scandinavian god, blonde and grave and calm, waiting to begin his lecture, but unable to because the crowd

roared and clapped and stamped their feet and would not stop.

At that huge explosion of welcome, Imogen's skin pringled and pricked all over, as if soldiers were swinging by to music, or a fire engine to the sound of bells, or as if the sun was setting in a glory of gold and green, or as if she was reading "The Revenge," or "The Charge of the Light Brigade," or "I will arise and go now and go to Innisfree." Imogen wept. She did not know that she wept, until the applause was at last over and Nansen began to speak. Then her brother Hugh poked her in the back and said, "What's up? Wipe your nose and don't snivel," and she was ashamed, and though she retorted, "Wipe your own. Snivel yourself," it was no satisfaction, because Hughie was not snivelling. Boys didn't, she had learnt, except when there was something to snivel about. They did not understand the female weakness which wept at fire engines, poetry and clapping, and was sick at squashed insects. Imogen wanted (even still half hoped) to be a boy, so she tried to hide her weaknesses.

Nansen began to speak.

"They're all quiet now. A pin might drop," said Imogen to herself, having lately learnt that phrase, but not getting it quite right.

But disappointment took her. Strain as she would, she could not hear what the god said. She could not make it into words, except now and then. It boomed along, sonorous, fluent English, above her plane of listening. A sentence here and there she got, entrancing and teasing, then away the voice soared, booming in another dimension. . . . Imogen had never learnt to listen; now for the first time she knew remorse for sermon-times spent in day-dreams, lessons at school

during which her mind had drifted away on seas of fancy like a rudderless boat, to be sharply recalled by "Imogen Carrington, what have I just said?" Seldom, indeed, did Imogen Carrington know. She would blush and stammer and get an inattention mark. No one in the second form had so many inattention marks as she had. Perhaps if she had fewer she could have understood Nansen now.

"Hughie, can you hear?"

"Most of the time. Don't interrupt."

Yes, Hughie could hear. Hughie was two years older; Hughie was ten, and into his square, solid, intelligent head the sounds emitted by Nansen were penetrating as words. Hughie could listen, when he had a mind to. Hughie was more clever than Imogen. Phyllis and Nancy could hear too, of course; they were older. Not Tony; but then Tony, who was only seven, wouldn't be trying. He didn't really care.

"Mother, *I can't hear.*"

"Don't talk, darling. I'll tell you afterwards. . . ."

But what was the good of that?

Imogen's strained attention flagged. If she couldn't hear, she couldn't. She sighed and gave up. She stared, fascinated, at the splendid figure on the platform, and imagined him on the *Fram*, sailing along through chunks of floating ice, and on each chunk a great white bear. Floes, they were, not chunks. . . . She and the boys meant, when they should be grown up, to fit out a *Fram* for themselves and find the Pole. Hughie had some idea of the South Pole. The sort of unusual, intelligent idea Hughie did get. But to Imogen the North was the Pole that called. Away they sailed, away and away. . . . Tony was attacked, as he fished from a floe, by a huge mother bear, with three

cubs. Imogen got there just in time; she slew the bear with her long knife, at imminent personal risk; it toppled backwards into the ice-cold water and died. The green sea reddened hijjously. But the three little cubs Imogen kept. She took them back to the *Fram*, and there was one for each of them, and they were called Mowgli, Marcus and Mercia, and Marcus was hers (the children had been taken to "The Sign of the Cross" last summer. There was a play indeed!), and the cubs slept in their bunks with them, and ate from their plates at meals. . . .

Another storm of clapping. It was over.

"Did you like it, Jennie? How much did you follow?"

"I liked it very much. I followed it a lot. . . . Mother, do you think, when I'm big, I shall ever *speak* to him? I mean, when Hughie and Tony and I have got our ship and have been to the Pole?"

"Oh, yes, darling. I should think when that happens, certainly. Only Dr. Nansen may be dead by that time, I'm afraid."

"Is he old, mother? Is he very old? Will he die before we grow up? Will he, mother?"

"Children, be careful crossing the road. . . . What's the matter, Imogen?"

"Will he die, mother, before we're grown up?"

"Who? Dr. Nansen? Oh, no, I hope not, why should he? Tony, don't dawdle. We'll go home by the Park. Keep together, children, there's such a crowd. . . . Imogen, *don't* play with strange dogs—I keep telling you."

"Mother, he's such a weeny one . . . all white, with a black nose and a red tongue. . . . Mother, when *can* I have a puppy?"

25

JUBILEE

Jubilee Day. Sweltering heat, after a grey beginning; baked streets. Irving, out of his wealth and generosity, had bought a block of seats in the Mall for the procession, and there the family sat. Papa, mamma, Vicky and Charles and their daughter Imogen (their other children were away at school), Rome, Stanley, Irving and his wife, and Una and Ted up from the country, with two stout and handsome children. The ladies wore beflowered, rakish, fly-away hats, and dresses with high collars and hunched sleeves and small waists. They look absurd now, in old pictures of the period, but they did not look absurd to one another at the time; they looked natural, and *comme-il-faut*, and smart. The boys wore their Eton suits and the girls light frocks. Imogen had a blue smock, gathered across the yoke, so that when she ran her fingers across the smocking it made a little soft, crisp noise. She sat next her little cousins from the country. But she was shy of them and turned her face away, and would say nothing to them after she had asked, "How is Rover? How is Lassie? Are the puppies born yet?" Fits of shyness seized upon Imogen like toothache, even now that she had been ever so long at school, and she would hang her head, and mutter monosyllabic answers, and wish she were Prince Prigio, with his cap of darkness, and when, in church, it came to the psalm about "Deliver me from the hands of strange children," she would pray it ardently, feeling how right David (if that psalm were one of his) had been. She was not shy of her cousins when she stayed at the farm with them, for

the farm was like paradise, full of calves, puppies, pigs and joy, and Katie, Dick, Martin and Dolly were its hierophants, and, though they weren't much good at being pirates or Red Indians, it was, no doubt, because they were always employed to better purpose. But in the Mall, seated in a tidy row waiting for the procession, it was different. Imogen wished that two of her brothers and sisters could have been there, instead of Katie and Dick. She held a fold of her mother's soft foulard dress tightly between her hot fingers. She whispered,

"Mother. Suppose someone felt sick and couldn't get out?"

"*Jean*—you don't feel sick, do you, child?" Vicky was alarmed, knowing the weakness of her daughter's stomach.

"Oh, no, *I* don't feel sick. But if someone did? What *would* they do, mother? Suppose the lady just above *you* felt sick, mother? Suppose she *was* sick? What would you do, mother?"

"Don't be silly, Imogen. If you talk like that you'll feel sick yourself. Talk to Katie. Don't you see you're interrupting grandmamma and me?"

But Imogen's grandmamma smiled across at her small pink, freckled face.

"Are you enjoying yourself, Jennie?"

"Yes, grandmamma . . . is the Queen older than you, grandmamma?"

"Yes. The Queen is seventy-eight. I am sixty-three. When I was only three years old, the Queen was crowned."

"Did you see her crowned?"

"No. I was too young."

"Is it a very big crown? Will she have it on? . . ."

Mother”—Imogen had a terrible thought and whispered it—“suppose *the Queen* was sick in her carriage, just opposite here? What *would* happen, mother? Would the procession wait or go on?”

“Now, Jennie, that will do. You’re being tiresome and silly. Talk to Katie and Dick. I’m talking to grandmamma; I told you before.”

(For that was the way in which children were kept under in the last century. Things have changed.)

Gold and purple and crimson. Silver and scarlet and gold. Fluttering pennons on tall Venetian masts. The Mall was a street in fairyland, or the New Jerusalem. And thronged with those who would never see either more nearly, being neither fantastic nor good. Never would most of those enter through the strait gate and see the gates of pearl and the city of golden streets. But was not this as good? Silver and violet and crimson and gold; gay streamers flying on the wind. Beautiful as an army with banners, the Mall was. . . .

“Let’s count the flags,” said Imogen to Katie and Dick.

“I remember the coronation,” said Mr. Garden, half to Irving, half to anyone sitting about who might be interested, after the way of elderly persons. “I was a very small boy, but my father took me to see the procession. I remember he put me up on his shoulder while it passed. . . . There wasn’t quite such a crowd then as to-day, I think.”

“People have increased,” said Rome. “Particularly in London. There are now too many, that is certain.”

“The crowd,” said Mr. Garden, his memory straying over that day sixty years ago, “was *prettier* then. I am nearly sure it was prettier. Costumes were better.”

“They could hardly,” said Rome, “have been worse.”

"I remember my mother, in a violet pelisse, that I think she had got new for the occasion, and a crinoline. . . . Crinolines hadn't grown large in '37—they were very graceful, I think. . . . And a pretty poke bonnet. And my father in a cravat, with close whiskers (whiskers hadn't grown large, either), and a tall grey hat. . . . And myself done up tight in blue nankeen with brass buttons, and your aunt Selina with white frilled garments showing below her frock. Little girls weren't so pretty," he added, looking across at Imogen's straight blue smock. "Well, well, sixty years ago. A great deal has happened since then. A great reign and a great time."

"They're pretty nearly due now," said Irving, consulting his watch. "Sure to be late, though."

"Who'll come first, mother?" Imogen asked.

"Captain Ames, on a horse. And behind him Life Guards and dragoons and that kind of person. . . . So I said to her, mamma, that really unless she could undertake to . . . Oh, listen, they really *are* coming now. Listen to the cheering, Jennie."

The noise of loyalty beat and broke like a sea from west to east. The sound shivered down Imogen's spine like music, and, as usual in such moments, her eyes pringled with hot tears, which she squeezed away. Then came the blaring of the trumpets and the rolling of the drums, and, singing high above them like a kettle on the boil, the faint, thin skirling of the pipes.

Imogen's hot hand clutched Vicky's dress.

"Now, Jean, don't get too excited, darling. Try and be quiet and sensible, like Katie and Dick."

"Mother, I *am* too excited, already. *Look*, mother—is that Captain Ames on a horse?"

Captain Ames on a horse (and what a horse!) it was.

And behind him Life Guards, dragoons, lancers, and that kind of person, in noble profusion. Very gallant and proud and lovely, prancing, curvetting, gay as bright flowers in a wind. . . . O God, what military men!

A little white-moustached general rode by, and great cheers crashed. "That's Lord Roberts, Imogen." Imogen, who knew her Kipling, had a lump in her throat for Bobs of Kandahar.

"And that's Lord Charles Beresford—with the cocked hat, do you see?"

Then came the great guns, running on their carriages. And then the cheering broke to a mighty storm, as it always does when sailors go by.

The sailors too had guns. Blue-jackets and smart, neat officers, Britannia's pets, Britannia's pride. . . .

Imogen, who had always meant to be a sailor, and who even now blindly hoped that somehow, before she reached the age for Osborne, a way would be made for her (either she would become a boy, or dress up as a boy, or the rule excluding girls from the senior service would be relaxed), gasped and screwed her hands tightly together against her palpitating breast. Here were sailors. Straight from the tossing blue sea; straight from pacing the quarter-deck, spyglass in hand, spying for enemy craft, climbing the rigging, setting her hard-a-port, manning the guns, raking the enemy amidships, holding up slavers, receiving surrendered swords. . . . Here, in brief, were sailors; and the junior service faded from the stage. Rule, Britannia, Britannia rules the waves. The moment was almost too excessive for a budding sailor, with wet eyes and lips pressed tight together to keep the face steady. Fortunately it passed, and was succeeded by the First

Prussian Dragoon Guards, great men with golden helmets, who could be admired without passion, and by strange brown men with turbans and big beards.

"Indians," Vicky said, and Indians too one knew from Kipling. And, "Sir Partab Singh," added the informing voice.

"Is he the chief of the Indians, mother?"

"Some kind of chief, yes."

Other brown men followed the Indians—little coppery, fuzzy Maoris; and with them rode splendid white men from New Zealand, and slouch-hatted Rhodesian Horse.

"From South Africa. . . . You remember Dr. Jim and his raid and Cecil Rhodes . . . the Christmas holidays before last . . ."

"When the chair broke and I cut my head." Yes, Imogen remembered, though she had been only seven then. Over the Transvaal border, then a gallop for life or death. . . . The chair was still broken. . . . Everyone seemed to remember Dr. Jim and his raid and Cecil Rhodes, for the slouch-hatted riders were cheered and cheered. Hurrah for South Africa! "Political trouble, much less war, cannot now be apprehended," the *Times* had said that morning, in a pæan of Jubilee satisfaction with sixty years of progress abroad and at home.

The best was over, for now began carriages—landaus and pairs. Foreign envoys. The Papal Nuncio sharing a landau with a gentleman from China, who cooled himself with a painted fan. Landau after landau bearing royal gentlemen, royal ladies. What a pity for them to be borne tamely in landaus instead of a-horse-back!

A colonial escort; an Indian escort; Lord Wolseley.

And then the procession's meaning and climax. "The Queen, Jennie."

Eight cream horses soberly drawing an open carriage, surrounded by postillions and red-coated running footmen; and in the carriage the little stout old lady, black-dressed, with black and white bonnet, and with her the beautiful Princess in heliotrope, dressed in the then current fashion, which royal ladies have adhered to ever since, never allowing themselves to be unsettled by the modes of the new century.

The Queen, God save her. The noise was monstrous, louder than any real noise could be.

"Dear old soul," cried Vicky's clear voice as she lustily clapped white kid hands.

Papa's blue eyes looked kindly down on the old lady whose coronation he remembered.

"A record to be proud of," said papa.

"Oh, yes, she's seen some life this sixty years, the old lady," admitted Irving.

"I expect she is feeling the heat a bit," said Una. "Well, I hope she's happy."

Behind them people were saying loyal Victorian things to one another about the dear old Queen.

"She's got the hearts of the Empire all right," they were saying, "whether they're under white skins or brown," and, "God bless our dear Queen," and, "How well she looks to-day," and, "She's an Empress, but she's a woman first. That's why we all love her so," and so on and so forth.

And, "There goes the Prince," they said, applauding now the burly middle-aged gentleman riding his horse by his mother's carriage.

"He must be gettin' pretty impatient, poor man," said Amy. "Nearly sixty himself, and mamma still

going strong. I expect he thinks this ought to be his silver Jubilee, not mamma's diamond one."

Mr. Garden looked pained. He often looked and was pained at the wife of Maurice.

Imogen's heart swelled for the Empress-Queen and the crash of loyalty, but not to bursting-point; for here was only a little old lady in a carriage (though drawn by eight cream horses like a fairy godmother's), and it is the swagger of gallantry that stirs. Sailors, soldiers, explorers, martyrs, firemen, circus-riders, Blondin on his rope, Christ on his cross, Joan of Arc on her white steed or her red pile—these are they that shake the soul to tears. Not old ladies, however mighty, who have sat on a throne for sixty years.

"The Prince, Jennie. The Prince of Wales."

"*Oh, mother, where?*"

The Prince of Wales. Gallant figure of legend. Young, noble, princely, with caracolling charger and a triple white plume in a silver helm. The bravest and the most chivalrous of the knights. Where was the Prince of Wales—"Oh, mother, where?"

"There—don't you see him? The big man in uniform with a grey beard, riding by the Queen's carriage."

The big man. . . . Oh, no, that must be a mistake.

"*That's not the Prince of Wales, mother. Not that one. . . .*"

"Of course. Why shouldn't it be?"

A thousand reasons why it shouldn't be. A hundred thousand reasons. . . . But in vain their legions beat against the hard little fact it *was*. Imogen's soaring heart sank like a stone in water. Fearful doubts whispered. Had all the Princes of Wales been like

that—fat elderly men with grey beards? The Black Prince. . . . Oh, no, not the Black Prince . . .

"The Black Prince wasn't like that, mother, was he?"

"It must be nearly the end now. Here's the music. . . . What, Jean? What's bothering you now?"

"The Black Prince . . ."

"Forget him, my precious. Don't let any prince weigh on your little mind. Here comes the music. Do you hear the pipes, children?"

So the great procession passed eastward, to rejoice Trafalgar Square, the Strand, Fleet Street and the lands across the river.

"It'll be a job getting out of this. Hold on to me, Imogen. Did you enjoy it, darling?"

"Yes." Imogen nodded, with the sun in her screwed-up eyes. "I wish we could run very fast down the streets to where they haven't passed yet, and see them all again. Do you think we could, mother?"

"I'm sure we couldn't. . . . You're not over-tired, mamma dear?"

"Oh, no. I feel very well. . . . But that child has turned green."

Vicky looked down, startled, at her daughter.

"Imogen. Aren't you well?"

"Mother, I think I may be going to be sick."

"Well, sit down till it's over. . . . Bless the child. It's the heat and the excitement. She gets taken like that sometimes, by way of reaction after her treats—most tiresome."

"Poor little mite."

"How are you feeling now, Jennie?"

Imogen said nothing. Yellow as cream cheese, she sat in her seat and asked God not to disgrace her by

letting her be sick in public, in the grand stand, on Jubilee Day, with all London looking on.

But, "I'm not sure, mother, that I do very much believe in prayers," she said to Vicky that evening.

26

RECESSIONAL

Triumphant patriotism is all very well. Proud imperialism is all very well. But these things should be carried on with a swagger, like a panache, with a hint of the gay and the absurd, marching, as it were, to the wild, conceited noise of skirling pipes. People of all nations, but more particularly the English, are apt to forget this, and bear their patriotism heavily, unctuously, speak solemnly of the white man's burden, and introduce religion into the gay and worldly affair.

Rudyard Kipling did this, on July 17th of Jubilee year, when he published in the *Times* "Recessional," beginning,—

"God of our fathers, known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle line,
Beneath Whose awful Hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget, lest we forget."

Stanley read it at breakfast, and shuddered. It was such a poem as the Jews might have made, in the days of Israel's glory—terribly godly and solemn. It was addressed to Jehovah, the Jewish Lord of Hosts. Those Jews! How their influence lasts! Beneath Whose awful Hand we hold. . . . Awful is a bad word, and

hand should never, whosoever hand it is, have a capital "h" (but that might have been the printer's fault, as anyone who knows printers must, in fairness, admit), and dominion over palm and pine is much too delightful and romantic a thing to be spoilt by being thus held. And, further down, it was worse.

"If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,
Such boasting as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the Law . . ."

Are we then Jews, and not Gentiles? And what Law? And lesser breeds—that was worst of all.

The whole poem seemed to Stanley so heavily ruinous of a jolly thing, so terribly expressive of the solemn pomposity into which national pride is ever ready to stumble, that it tarnished for her something young and buoyant and absurd into which she had flung herself of late. As Miss Edith Cavell remarked twenty years later, patriotism is not enough. It needs to be as the cherishing love a man has for the soil of his home; or as the bitter, desperate striving unto death of the oppressed race, the damned desperation of the rebel; or as the gay and gallant flying of gaudy banners. Successful, smug, solemn, conquering patriotism is not nearly enough—or perhaps it is a good deal too much. Anyhow, it is all wrong.

"What a man!" Stanley muttered, meaning Mr. Rudyard Kipling, who did, if anyone, know all about the adventure of empire-building, its swagger, glitter and romance, and must needs turn himself into a preacher.

Stanley's niece, Imogen, happened to have "Recessional" read aloud to her form at school, by one whom

she greatly loved (for it must be owned that this unbalanced child only too readily adored those who taught her), and shyly she wriggled her mind away from the sense of the sounding lines. She liked,

“Far-called, our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire;
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre . . .”

and,

“The tumult and the shouting dies,
The captains and the kings depart . . .”

and,

“All valiant dust that builds on dust . . .”

but disliked the rest. If Miss Treherne liked it, it must, she knew, be somehow good; further, it was by Kipling, who had made Mowgli, and,

“It’s north you may run to the rime-ringed sun,
Or south to the blind Horn’s hate;
Or east all the way into Mississippi Bay,
Or west to the Golden Gate. . . .”

But all the same, Imogen had no use for it. In the foolish jargon of school, it was “pi.”

But newspapers said at the time, and history books have said since, that this poem sounded a fine and needed note; and, in fact, it was a good deal liked. Mr. Garden liked it. Mr. Garden was afraid that Britain was getting a little above itself with Empire. As, indeed, it doubtless was, said Stanley, and why not? Empires, like life, only endure for a brief period, and we may as well enjoy them while we may.

They are wasted on those who do not enjoy them. Time bears us off, as lightly as the wind lifts up the smoke and carries it away. . . . The grave's a fine and private place, but in it there are no empires, only the valiant dust that builds on dust, and has come to dust at the last. So let us by all means be above ourselves while we may and if we can, in the brief space that is ours before we must be below ourselves forever.

Mr. Garden replied that there may be many brief spaces to come, for all of us, and we should be training ourselves for these. . . . For papa was still a Theosophist, and believed in infinitely numerous reincarnations. He did not desire them, for he had had troubles enough, for one; but he knew that they would occur. He looked with apprehension down a vista of lives. To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow, to the last syllable of recorded time—or anyhow, until papa should be made perfect—and that, papa humbly felt, was a very long time ahead.

27

BOND STREET

London glittered sweetly, washed by the May sun. The streets were bland and gay, like a lady of fashion taking the air. Miss Garden walked abroad, bland and gay too, slim and erect in neat coat and skirt (skirt touching the pavement as she walked—disgusting, but skirts did), lace jabot at the high stock collar, and large beribboned hat, tipped a little forward so that the sunshine caught the fair hair sweeping upward from the nape. She led a huge Borzoi on a leash, and

as she walked she surveyed London, its people, its streets, its shops. In a gold net purse bag she carried notes and clinking sovereigns. She had gambled to good purpose last night at bridge, the new card game. She was a great gambler. Bridge, whist, baccarat, poker, roulette and Monte Carlo—at all these she won and lost, with the same equable sangfroid. Her parents did not like it, though Rome's income, left her by her grandfather, was her own. They did not, in many ways, approve of their clever Rome, so unlike themselves. But on such disapprovals, so Rome assured them, family life is based. Mutual disapproval, mutual toleration; that is family, as, indeed, so much other, life.

Anyhow, Rome gambled. The older she grew the more greatly and intelligently she gambled. She had her systems, ingeniously worked out, for Monte Carlo. She had been there this Easter, together with her friend and ally, Guy Donkin, a cheerful barrister three years her junior, who had been used to ask her to marry him, but had now settled down to a sporting friendship and confided to her his fleeting affairs of the heart. Here again Mr. and Mrs. Garden disapproved. Going to Monte Carlo to meet a man; staying at the same hotel with him; seen everywhere with him; even in the late, the very late thirties, was this right or wise? It set people talking. . . .

"As to that," Rome carelessly dismissed it, "be sure people will always talk. You may be sure, too, mamma, that Guy and I do nothing not *comme-il-faut*. We are both too worldly-wise for that. We may *épater* the bourgeois possibly, but we shan't *épater* our own world. We know its foolish rules, and we both find it more comfortable to keep them."

Entirely of the world Miss Garden looked, this May morning, strolling down Bond Street, a little cynical, a little blasé, very well-dressed, intensely civilised, exquisitely poised, delicately, cleanly fair. She would soon be thirty-nine, and looked just that, neither more nor less.

A window full of jade caught her roving eye. She went in; she bought a clear jade elephant, and a dull jade lump that swung on a fine platinum chain. She also got a tortoise-shell cigarette case.

She stopped next at a window full of little dogs. Big-headed Sealeyham puppies; Poltalloch terriers. These she looked at critically. She meant to have a Poltalloch, but to order one from their home in the West Highlands when next she stayed there. Adorable puppies. The Borzoi sniffed at them through plate glass, and grunted.

Irish lace. Jabots of *pointe de Venise*, and deep collars of Honiton and *pointe de Flandres*, and handkerchiefs edged with Chantilly. Miss Garden entered the shop; came out with a jabot for herself, handkerchiefs for Vicky's birthday. Then ivory opera glasses, and an amber cigarette holder caught her fancy. Soon her free hand was slung with neat paper packages. That was a bore; she wished she had had them all sent.

She strolled on, turned into Stewart's, ordered a box of chocolates for Stanley's children, and met Mr. Guy Donkin for lunch. They were going to a picture show together.

"I am not," said Miss Garden, "fit for a respectable picture gallery, as you see." She indicated the packages and the Borzoi. "But nevertheless we will go. Jeremy shall wait in the street while we criticise the

art of our friends. I was overtaken this morning by the lust of possession. I often get it on fine mornings after fortunate nights. I find that the gambler's life works out, on the whole, pretty evenly—what one makes at the dice one loses in the shops. And what one loses at play one saves off the shops. One walk abroad, looking at everything and buying nothing, will save one some hundreds of pounds. It is the easiest way of gaining, though not the most amusing. . . . I see you have a lunch edition. How go the wars?"

The most noticeable wars at the moment were those between America and Spain, and between Great Britain and the Soudanese.

"Dewey's occupied Manila. The Fuzzies have lost three more zarebas. It must be warm for fighting out there to-day. . . . Here's an article by some Dean on the vulgarity of modern extravagances. Meant for you, Rome, with all your packages. . . . *Are* we specially extravagant just now? I suppose there's a lot of money going about, one way and another. Business is so good. And all these gold mines and companies. . . . The Dean is worrying about the growing habit of entertaining in restaurants instead of in the home. Why not? And about women taking to cosmetics again, after a century of abstinence. Again, why not? I agree with Max about that. The clergy do worry so, poor dears; if it isn't one thing, it's another. Oh, and on Tuesday we're all to wear a white rose, for the Old Man's funeral day."

"How touching! It will please papa. He's really distressed about the Old Man; he thinks politics on the grand scale are over, and that the giants are dead. Politics and politicians are certainly intensely dull in these days; but then, except for an occasional gleam,

they probably always were. Partly because people insist on taking them so solemnly, instead of as a farce. . . . There's my ex-brother-in-law, lunching with a quite new and lovely young woman. He always smiles at me, blandly and without shame. I can't forgive him for spoiling Stanley's life, but I can't help rather liking him still. He always sends us tickets for his first nights, and they're very amusing. A shameless reactionary, but so witty. Maurice and Irving cut him, which I think crude. Men are so intolerant. I cut no one, except when I'm afraid of being bored by them. Thank you, yes: Turkish."

They strolled off through the pleasant city to look at pictures, which they could both criticise with as much intelligence as was necessary, and Miss Garden with rather more. Then Mr. Donkin returned to the Bar, and Miss Garden drove home in a hansom with the Borzoi and the gleanings from Bond Street. At five she was going to an At Home somewhere; later she was dining out and going to the opera. Life was full; life was amusing; life hung a brilliant curtain over the abyss. From the abyss Miss Garden turned her eyes; in it lay love and death, locked bitterly together for evermore.

1898 swaggered by under a hot summer sun. The century swaggered deathwards, gay with gold and fatness, unsteady, dark and confused. "The Belle of New York" at the theatres, the Simple Life on the land, free-wheel bicycles on the road, motor cars, coming first in single spies, then in battalions, the victory of Omdur-

man, Kitchener occupying Khartoum and the French Fashoda, unpleasant international incidents (for international incidents are always unpleasant), millionaires rising like stars, fortunes made and spent, business booming, companies floated and burst, names of drinks, provender and medicines flaming from the skies, Swinburne publishing "Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards," Mr. Yeats "The Wind Among the Reeds," Mr. Kipling "Stalky & Co." and "The Day's Work," Mr. Conrad "Tales of Unrest," Mr. Stephen Phillips "Paolo and Francesca," Mr. Thomas Hardy "Wessex Poems," Mr. H. G. Wells "The War of the Worlds," Miss Mary Cholmondeley "Red Pottage," Mrs. Humphry Ward "Helbeck of Bannisdale," Mr. Maurice Hewlett "The Forest Lovers," Mr. Kenneth Grahame "Dream Days," Mr. Hall Caine "The Christian," George Meredith greeted by literary England on his seventieth birthday, bad novels pouring into the libraries with terrifying increase of speed, wireless telegraphy used at sea, flying machines experimented with, Liberals sickening with Imperialism or Little Englandism, Conservatives with jingoism run mad, the *Speaker* changing hands, the Encyclopædia Britannica sold by the *Times*, anti-ritualist agitations, armament limitation conferences convened by Russia and attended by the Powers, all of whom were busy as bees at home increasing their armies and navies and hatching military plots.

And then the South African Uitlanders sent complaints and petitions from the Rand, and despatches began to pass between Her Majesty's government and President Kruger's. Despatches are most unfortunate and unwise means of communication; they always make trouble.

There was bound to be war, people began saying.

Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Rhodes intended it, and would not be happy till they got it. Probably President Kruger and his Burghers also intended it. Certainly the Uitlanders hoped for it. The British public were not averse. They hated the Boers, and wanted excitement and more Empire. It was a hopeless business. War was bound to come, and came, in October, 1899.

Mr. Garden said, "A bad business. Gladstone would never have let it come to this. One doesn't trust Chamberlain. A bad, dishonest business."

Mrs. Garden said, "Those poor lads going out just before the winter. . . ."

Vicky said, "Charles says it won't be long. We shall have them asking for terms in a month."

Maurice said, "That damned jingo, Chamberlain," and filled his fountain pen with more vitriol.

Amy said, "Those canting, snuffing old farmers. *They* won't keep us long."

Rome said, "Unfortunate. But it's a way in which centuries often end."

Stanley said, "Right or wrong, we've got to win now."

Irving said, "I shall take the opportunity to run out and see to my mining interests. Up the Rand," and he enlisted in the C. I. V. and went.

Una said, "War! How silly. If it isn't one thing it's another. Why not leave the poor farmers alone?" For she sympathised with farmers, and was all for leaving people alone.

The children of all of them shouted for the soldiers and the flag, and sang "Soldiers of the Queen."

"And when we say we've always won,
And when they ask us how it's done . . ."

A very bright song. That was the right, amusing spirit of patriotism, not the "Recessional," and not prayers sent forth for the people's use by Bishops.

Vicky's children got up early one morning in the Christmas holidays without leave, and saw a detachment of the C. I. V. go off from Victoria. There was a raw, yellow fog, and the khaki figures loomed oddly through it. The press of the swaying, shouting crowd was terrifying, exhilarating. Imogen, linked up between Phyllis and Hugh, was crushed, swung, caught off her feet. Persons of eleven had no business in that crowd. Phyllis and Nancy had not wanted her and Tony to come, but they had firmly done so. Imogen could scarcely see the soldiers, only the broad backs her face was pressed against. Herd enthusiasm caught and held them all, and they shouted and sang with the rest, hoarsely, choking in the fog.

"They'll all be killed," sobbed a woman close to them. "We'll never see their brave faces again. . . ."

At that Imogen's eyes brimmed over, but she could not put up her hands to wipe them, for her arms were tight wedged. She could only snuffle and blink. Splendid heroes! They would be killed by the Boers, sure enough, every one of them. . . . Horrible Boers with great Bibles and sjamboks and guns. Hateful, hateful Boers. If only one were allowed to go and fight them, as Uncle Irving was going. Thank Heaven, it was rather age than sex that kept one from doing that; the boys couldn't go any more than Imogen could. If the boys had been old enough and had gone, Imogen would somehow, she felt sure, have gone too. To be left out was too awful.

But these were grown men. Splendid men. Lucky men, for they would soon be roving the veldt with

guns and bayonets under the African sun; they would lurk in ambush behind kopjes and arise and slay their brother Boer, the canting, bearded foe, with great slaughter. Even if they did never come back, how could man die better?

The crowd swayed and shoved, lifting the children from their feet. Imogen's chest was crushed against the back in front of her; she fought for breath. There was an acrid, musty smell; the raw air was close with breathing.

A crowd is queer. A number of individuals gather together for one purpose, and you get not a number of individuals, but a crowd. It is like a new, strange animal, sub-human. It may do anything. Go crazy with panic, or rage, or excitement, or delight. Now it was enthusiasm that gripped and swayed it, and caused it to shout and sing. Songs rippled over it, starting somewhere, caught from mouth to mouth.

“Cook's son, duke's son, son of a belted earl . . .
Fifty thousand horse and foot going to Table
Bay. . . .”

And then again the constant chorus—“God bless you, Tommy Atkins, here's your country's love to you!”

It was over at last. The heroes had gone. The crowd broke and pushed out from the station gates, flooding the choked yellow streets.

“There's our bus,” said Phyllis, a good organiser. “Come on. Stick together.”

They besieged and rushed the bus as troops rush a fort. Being vigorous and athletic children, they stormed it successfully.

"We shall catch it from mother," said Phyllis, now they had leisure to look ahead. "But it's been worth it."

29

OF CENTURIES

That sad, disappointing, disillusioning, silly war crawled through that bitter winter of defeat, until by sheer force of numbers, the undefeatable Boers were a little checked in the spring of 1900.

Life is disappointing. Imogen, along with many others, thought and hoped that 1900 would be a new century. It was not a new century. There was quite a case for its being so. When you turned twelve, you began your thirteenth year. When you had counted up to 100 you had completed that hundred and were good for the next. It all depended on whether you numbered the completion of a year from the first day when you began saying 1900, or not till its last day, when you stopped saying it. The Astronomer Royal adjudicated that it was on its last day, and that they had, in fact, said 1900 prematurely, saying it before the last second of December the 31st. He may have been right. He probably was right. But the disappointment of the young, to whom a year is very long, its end hidden in mists, like mountain tops which you perhaps shall never reach—the disappointment of the young at the opening of the year 1900 was very great.

"At all events," said Imogen, "we can write 1900. We can say, 'It's 1900.' " But what one could not say was, "I remember, last century, going to the sea-side for the holidays. . . ." "Last century bicycles and

steam engines came in. . . ." or, "We, of the twentieth century. . . ." That would have to wait.

The funny thing was that you could not, however hard you thought, lay your finger on the moment when the new century would be born. Imogen used to try, lying in bed before she went to sleep. One second you said, "We of the nineteenth century"; the next second you said, "We of the twentieth century." But there must be a moment in between, when it was neither; surely there must. A queer little isolated point in time, with no magnitude, but only position. . . . The same point must be between one day and the next, one hour and the next . . . all points in time were such points . . . but you could never find them . . . always you either looked forward or looked back . . . you said, "now—now—now," trying to catch now, but you never could . . . and such vain communings with time lead one drowsily into sleep.

30

PRO-BOER

In Stanley the Boer War slew the jingo spirit, turned back on itself the cresting wave of imperialism. Not because it was an ill-fought, stupidly managed, for long unsuccessful war, but because it was war, and war was, when seen functioning, senseless and horrible. It was nearly as bad when Great Britain at last began to defeat the too clever farmers. It was almost worst in the summer of 1900, when the news of the relief of Mafeking caused so much more tempestuous a hysteria than the other reliefs had caused, and when Lord Roberts occupied Johannesburg and proclaimed the

annexation of the Orange Free State, and when Pretoria was taken, and yet the war went on and on and on.

"Is this the way," asked Liberals, "to secure in the end any kind of working reconciliation between ourselves and the conquered enemy? If Great Britain wishes to be burdened for ever with a sullen, hostile, exasperated people, embittered with the memory of burnt farms, useless slaughter and destruction, she is taking the right course." And so forth. Liberals always talk like that. Those who disagreed merely retorted, "Pro-Boer," which took less time. The Latin word "pro" has been found always very useful and insulting.

Stanley became a pro-Boer. She disliked all she knew of Boers very much, but that had nothing to do with it. A pro-Boer, like a pro-German much later, was one who was in favour of making terms with the enemy on the victories already gained. The Conciliation Committee were pro-Boer. The Liberal newspapers were pro-Boer, except the *Chronicle*, which threw Mr. Massingham overboard to be pro-Boer by himself. Maurice Garden was, of course, pro-Boer. He loathed Boers, the heavy-witted, brutal Bible-men, with their unctuous Cromwellian cant. But fiercely and contemptuously he was pro-Boer. Rome, too, was pro-Boer; had been from the first.

"A most unpleasant people," she had said. "What a mistake not to leave them to themselves! If the Uitlanders disliked them as much as I should, they wouldn't go on living there and sending complaints to us; they would come away. All this imperialism is so very unbalanced."

"Worse than unbalanced, Rome," her papa sadly

said. "One hesitates to speak harshly, but it must be called un-Christian. The Churches have gone terribly astray over it. The unhappy Churches. . . ."

Unhappy because terribly astray on so many topics, papa meant. Even now he was mourning the death of his friend Dr. Mivart, who had been deprived of the sacraments of his church because he had, in the *Nineteenth Century* and the *Fortnightly Review*, written articles, however reverent, on "The Continuity of Catholicism," and in them seemed to give to the infallible authority of the Church a lower place than to human reason. Alas for the Catholic Church, which so treated its best sons! Never, papa knew, could he join that great Church again. Religion too had suffered a heavy blow in the death, in January, of Dr. Martineau. And Ruskin also went that month. . . . Like leaves the great Victorians were falling. Papa, brooding over a great epoch so soon to close, could not but be a pro-Boer and hope that this horrid war, which jarred and confused its last years, would soon end.

As for Maurice, his newspaper office was raided and smashed on Mafeking night, and he himself carried out and ducked in Trafalgar Square basin. No one hurt him. No one wanted, on this happy, good-humoured night, to hurt this small, frail, scornful, slightly intoxicated, obviously courageous editor, who brightly insulted them to their faces as they tied him up.

Vicky's children were not pro-Boer. No one could have called them that. They were all for a good whacking victory. Imogen, it must be owned, did once, in a moment of seeing the point of view of the foe (Imogen usually saw all the points of view there were to see; her eye was not single, which made life a very dizzy business for her), write a poem beginning:

"Daddy and mother think Uncle Maurice awfully wrong, and so do I. He's a *real* pro-Boer."

"Well, what are you? Are you only shamming pro-Boer?"

"I'm not a pro-Boer at all. I'm pro-us. I only said I could see their point of view. . . ."

"Oh, you do talk tosh. Point of view. No one but grown-up people uses words like that. Imogen's getting awfully cocky now Miss Cradock always says her compositions are good. Come and play tig."

And, since little girls at school are very seldom unkind, they included Imogen in the game and bore no malice.

Irving was no pro-Boer. He wrote home, in the autumn of 1900, "We're getting on, but we're not near finished with brother Boer yet. Maurice is talking through his hat, as usual. Any fool out here knows that if we're to suck any advantage out of this war (and there's no small advantage to be sucked, I can tell you), we've got to *win* it. Those radical gas-bags at home don't know the first thing about it."

It is an eternal and familiar dispute, and which side one takes in it really seems to depend more on temperament than on the amount one knows about it.

31

END OF VICTORIANISM

The nineteenth century did actually end at last. Probably everyone over twelve and under seventy sat up to see it out, to see the twentieth in, to catch that elusive, dramatic moment and savour it.

The twentieth century. Imogen, when she woke on

New Year's Day, could scarcely believe it. It was perhaps, she thought, a drunken dream. For 'the Carringtons, like all right-thinking persons, always kept Hogmanny in punch. But the twentieth century it was, and a clear frosty morning. Imogen shouted to Nancy, lying in intoxicated slumbers in the other bed, "Happy new century," lest Nancy should say it first, then looked at the new century out of the window. What a jolly century it looked; what a jolly century it was going to be! A hundred happy years. At the end of it she would be 112. A snowy-haired but still active old lady, living in a white house on a South Sea Island, bathing every morning (but not too early) and then getting back into bed and eating her breakfast of mangoes, bread-fruit, delicious home-grown coffee and honey. Then a little roller skating on the shining parquet floor of the hall; a lovely hall, hung with the trophies of her bow—reindeer, sand-bok, polar bear, grizzly, lion, tiger, cheetah, wombat and wolf. No birds. Shooting birds was no fun. Imogen knew, for she had shot her first and only sparrow last week, with her new catapult. The boys had been delighted, but she had nearly cried. It had been beastly. Hereafter she meant only to use the catapult on cows, brothers and sisters, and still life. That old lady of the year 2,000 should have only one bird to her score.

The question was, what to do till getting-up time. Wake Nancy—but this was next to impossible. Nancy was a remarkably fast sleeper. One might go and try to wake the boys, and get them to come out catapulting in the garden, or roller skating in the square. Or one might snuggle down in bed again and read "Treasure Island." Or not read, but lie and think about the new century; perhaps make a poem about it. Imogen

extracted from the pocket of her frock, that hung on a chair, a stubby pencil, a note-book and a stick of barley-sugar. With these she curled up among the bed-clothes. Happily she sucked and pondered. Holidays; breakfast time not for ages; Christmas presents with the gloss still on (among them a pair of roller skates and *Brassey's Naval Annual* and a new bow and arrows), and a brand new century to explore. Sing joy, sing joy.

"Roland lay in his bunk," murmured Imogen, "and heard the prow of the ship grinding through ice-floes as she pursued her way. Eight bells sounded. With a hijous shock he remembered the events of last night. He put his hand to his head; it was caked with dried blood where the pirates had struck him with the crow-bar. A faint moan of anguish was wrung from his white lips. . . ."

Roland was Imogen, and his adventures had meandered on in serial form in her mind for several months. She had always, ever since she remembered, impersonated some boy or youth as she went about. "Lithe as a panther," she would murmur within herself, as she climbed a tree, "Wilfrid swarmed up the bare trunk. He scanned the horizon. In the distance he saw a puff of smoke, and heard, far away, faint shrieks. 'Indians,' he said, 'at their howwid work. The question for me is, can I warn the settlers in time? If the Redskins catch me, I shall wish I had never been born. No; I will escape now and save myself.'"

It was characteristic of Wilfrid, or Roland, or Dennis, or whatever he was at the moment called, that he usually did a cowardly thing at first, then repented and acted like a hero, suffering thereby both the condemnation of his friends for his cowardice and the tortures

of his foes for his courage. He was a rather morbid youth, who enjoyed repentance and heroic amendment, no simple, stalwart soul. Usually he was in the navy.

Thus, in idle, barley-sugared dreamings, this representative of the young generation began the new century.

"What," mused her grandfather, watching from his bed the winter morning grow, "will the new age be?"

"Much like the old ages, I shouldn't wonder," Mrs. Garden murmured, drowsily. "People and things stay much the same . . . much the same. . . ."

"The eternal wheel," papa speculated, still adhering to his latest faith, but with a note of question. "The eternal, turning wheel. I wonder. . . ."

But what mamma wondered, catching the familiar note of doubt in his voice, was where the eternal turning wheel would next land papa.

"What a world we'll make it, won't we, my son and daughter," Stanley hopefully exclaimed to her children as they rioted about her room. "What a century we'll have! It belongs to the people of your age, you know. You've got to see it's a good one. . . . Now take yourselves off and let me get up. Run and turn on the cold tap for me, and put the warm at a trickle."

Stanley whistled as she dressed.

"Yet another century," her sister Rome commented, with languid amusement, as her early tea was brought to her. "How many we have, to be sure! I wonder if, perhaps, it is not even too many?"

"*Maurice*," shrilly called Maurice's wife, entering his room at nine o'clock. "Well, I declare!"

Maurice lay heavily sleeping, and whiskey exhaled from his breath. He had come home at three o'clock this morning.

"A nice way to begin the new year," said Amy; she did not say "new century," because she was of those who could not see but that the century had been new in 1900. She shook her husband's shoulder, looking down with distaste at his thin, sharp-featured sleeping face, its usual pallor heavily flushed.

"A nice example to the children. And you always writing rubbish about social reform. . . . You make me sick."

"Go away," said Maurice, half opening hot eyes. "Le'me alone. My head's bad. . . ."

"So I should imagine," said Amy. "I'm sick and tired of you, Maurice."

"Go away then. Right away. We'd both be happier. Why don't you?"

"Oh, I daresay I'm old-fashioned," said Amy. "I was brought up to think a wife's place was with her husband. Of course, I'm probably *wrong*. I'm always surprised *you* don't leave *me*, feeling as you do."

Maurice, waking a little more, surveyed her with morose, heavy, aching eyes, and moistened his dry lips.

"You're not surprised. You know it's because of the children. It's my job to see they grow up decently, with decent ideas and a chance."

At that Amy's mirth overcame her.

"Decent ideas! You're a nice educator of children, aren't you! *Look* at yourself lying there. . . ."

She pointed to the looking-glass opposite his bed.

"Get out, please," said Maurice, coldly. "I've got to write my leader."

Meanwhile the most august representative of the Victorian age wavered wearily between her own century and this strange new one, peering blindly down the coming road as into a grave. It did not belong to

her, the new century. She had had her day. A few days of the new young era, and she would slip into the night, giving place to the rough young forces knocking at the door.

The great Victorian century was dead.

PART III
EDWARDIAN

I

DISCURSIVE

THE Edwardians were, as we now think, a brief generation to themselves, set between Victorianism and neo-Georgianism (it is a pity that we should have no better name for the present reign, for "Georgian" belongs by right to a period quite other; royalty having ever been sadly unimaginative in its choice of Christian names). Set between the nineteenth century and the full swing of the twentieth, those brief ten years we call Edwardian seem now like a short spring day. They were a gay and yet an earnest time. A time of social reform on the one hand and social brilliance on the other. The heyday at once of intellectual Fabianism and of extravagant dissipation. The hour of the repertory theatres, the Irish Players, Bernard Shaw and Granville Barker at the Court, Miss Horniman in the provinces, absurd musical comedies that bloomed like gay flowers of a day and died. The onrush of motor cars and the decline of bicycles and the horse; extravagant country-house parties at which royalty consented to be entertained, with royal bonhomie and royal exactions of etiquette. . . . "Mr. Blank, have we not seen that suit rather often before?" "Lady Dash, surely we remember this wall-paper. . . ." "Lord Somebody, this is a very abominable dinner. . . ." What standards to live up to! There was nothing dowdy about our King Edward. He set the

stakes high, and all who could afford it played. Pageants and processions passed in regal splendour. Money nobly flowed.

Ideals changed. The sanctity and domesticity of the *Heim* was no more a royal fetish. "Respectability," that good old word, degraded and ill-used for so long, sank into discredit, sank lower in the social scale. No more were unfortunate ladies who had had marital troubles coldly banned from court, for a larger charity (except as to suits, dinners and wall-papers) obtained. Victorian sternness, Victorian prudery and intolerance, still prevailed among some of the older aristocracy, among most of the smaller squirearchy, the professional classes and the petty bourgeoisie; but among most of the wealthy, most of the titled, most of the gay and extravagant classes, a wider liberty grew.

In the intervals of social pleasures, Edward the Peacemaker was busy about the Balance of Power in Europe. He did not care about his cousin Wilhelm. He made an Entente with France, and came to an understanding with Russia, so that when the Trouble should come—and experienced royalty knows that from time to time, the Trouble is bound to come—we should not meet it singly. The weak point about ententes is that when the Trouble comes to one's fellow-members, they do not meet it singly either. Considering this, and considering also the annoyance and alarm they inspire in those not in them, and taking them all round, ententes seem on the whole a pity. But at the time English people were pleased with this one, and Edward was hopefully called the Peacemaker, just as Victoria had been called Good, and Elizabeth Virgin, and Mary Bloody. We love to name our roy-

alties, and we much prefer to name them kindly. Mary must have been, and doubtless was, very bloody indeed before her people bestowed on her that opprobrious title. Other sovereigns—most other sovereigns—have been pretty bloody too, but none of them bloody enough to be so called.

A queer time! Perhaps a transition time; for that matter, this is one of the things times always are. The world of fashion led by an elderly royal gentleman bred at the Victorian court of his mother, and retaining queer Victorian traditions that younger gentlemen and ladies did not observe. King Edward, for instance, observed Sunday with some strictness. He thought it right; he felt it should be done. The British Sunday was an institution, and King Edward was all for institutions. A generation was growing up, had already grown up, who did not understand about Sunday in that sense. But you may observe about elderly Victorian persons that, however loosely they may sit to Sunday, they usually have a sense of it. They play or work on it consciously, with a feeling that they are breaking a foolish rule, possibly offending an imaginary public opinion. They seldom quite realise that the rule and the opinion they are thinking of are nearly obsolete. They seldom regard Sunday (with reference to the occupations practised on it), precisely as if it were a weekday. Institutions die hard. They linger long after their informing spirit has died.

Anyhow, King Edward VII was a Victorian gentleman long before he was an Edwardian. So he observed Sunday and the lesser proprieties, without self-consciousness. He was like his mother, with a difference. Both had a sense of royal dignity and of the Proper Thing. His subjects, too, had a sense of the

Proper Thing: people always have. But the Proper Thing, revered as ever, gradually changed its face, or rather turned a somersault and alighted on its head.

Well, the Edwardians, like the Elizabethans, the Jacobeans, the Carolines, the Georgians, the Victorians, and the neo-Georgians, were a mixed lot. This attempt to class them, to stigmatise them with adjectives, is unscientific, sentimental, and wildly incorrect. But, because it is rather more interesting than to admit frankly that they were merely a set of individuals, it will always be done.

2

VIVE LE ROI

La reine est morte. Vive le roi. King Edward was proclaimed by heralds, by trumpeters, and with the rolling of drums; and God save the King. Then they buried the late queen with royal pomp, and kings, emperors, archdukes and crown princes rode with her to the tomb.

King Edward opened Parliament in state. A great king he was for pageantry and for state. He read the Accession Declaration. It was a tactlessly worded declaration in some ways, for it was drawn up in days when Roman Catholicism was not well thought of by the Head of the Church and Defender of the Faith. King Edward did not like it. "His Majesty," wrote the outraged Catholic peers, "would willingly have been relieved from the necessity of branding with contumelious epithets the religious tenets of any of his subjects." There were protests not only from Roman Catholics, but from Protestants and agnostics, who all, in the main, thought it rude. But some there were

who, though they knew it was rude, knew also that it was right to be rude to Roman Catholics. "They are the king's subjects as much as others, and belong to a distinguished old church," the protesters declared. "The thing is an antediluvian piece of ill-breeding."

"Bloody Mary. The Inquisition. No Popery," was the crude reply. "And are not Roman Catholics always rude to our religion? Why, then, should we not be rude to theirs?"

"Roman Catholics," replied the more polite and sophisticated, "cannot help being a little rude—if you call it so—to other faiths. They are not to blame. It is an article of their faith that theirs is the only true and good church. There is no such article in other faiths. We are not obliged by our religion to believe them wrong, as they are, unfortunately, obliged to believe us wrong. Obviously, then, we should practise the courtesy forbidden to them. It is more generous and dignified. Also, they are as good as we are. All religions are doubtless in the main inaccurate, and one does not differ appreciably from another. And His Majesty ought to preserve a strict impartiality concerning the many and various faiths of his people. The Declaration is ignorant, unstatesmanlike and obscurantist, and smacks of vulgar seventeenth century protestantism. It is a worse scandal than the Thirty-nine Articles."

But "No Popery" was still the cry of the noisy few, and the scandal remained. Reluctantly protesting his firm intention to give no countenance to the religion of some millions of his subjects, and solemnly in the presence of God professing, testifying and declaring that he did make this declaration in the plaine and ordinary sense of the words as they were commonly

understood by English Protestants, without any evasion, equivocation or mentall reservation whatsoever, without any dispensation from the Pope, either already granted or to be sought later, the king opened his khaki-elected Parliament, which proved as ineffective as parliaments always do. It is of no importance which side is in office in Parliament; any study of the subject must convince the earnest student that all parties are about equally stupid. By some fluke, useful Acts may from time to time get passed by any government that happens to be in power. More often, foolish and injurious Acts get passed. Personality and intelligence in ministers do certainly make some difference; but party, it seems, makes none. The stupid, the inert, the dishonest and the ill-intentioned flourish like bay-trees impartially on both sides of the avenue. Only the very *naïf* can believe that party matters, in the long run. This first Parliament of the twentieth century proved, perhaps, even more than usually inept, as parliaments elected during war excitements are apt to be. It could deal neither with education, defences, labour, finance nor poisoned beer.

3

PAPA'S NEW FAITH

The war scrambled on; a tedious, ineffective guerilla business. The Concentration Camp trouble began, and over its rights and wrongs England was split.

Mr. Garden hated the thought of these camps, where Boer women and children, driven from their homes, dwelt in discomfort (so said Miss Emily Hobhouse and others), and fell ill and died. They might be, as

their defenders maintained, kindly meant, but it was all very disagreeable. In fact, the whole war preyed on papa's mind and nerves. More and more it seemed to him a hideous defiance of any possible Christian order of society, a thing wholly outside the sphere of God's scheme for the world. But, then, of course, nearly everything was that, and always had been. So utterly outside that sphere were most of the world's happenings that it sometimes seemed to papa as if they could scarcely *be* happenings, as if they must be evil illusions of our own, outside the great Reality. The more papa brooded over this Reality, the more he became persuaded that it must be absolute and all pervasive, that nothing else really existed. "We make evil by our thought," said papa. "God knows no evil. . . . God does not know about the war. Nor about the Concentration Camps. . . ."

It will be seen that papa was ripe for the acceptance of a new creed which had recently come across the Atlantic and was becoming fashionable in this country. Christian Science fastened on papa like a mosquito, and bit him hard. It comforted him very much to think that God did not know about the war. He told his grandchildren about this ignorance on the part of the Deity.

Imogen pondered it. She had a metaphysical and enquiring mind, and was always interested in God.

"What *does* God think all those soldiers are doing out in Africa, grandpapa?" she asked, after a considering pause. "Or doesn't he know they're soldiers?"

"He knows they are unhappy people following an evil illusion, my child," her grandpapa told her. "You see, there is no war really—not on God's plane. There couldn't be."

Imogen pondered it again, corrugating her forehead. She dearly liked to understand things.

"Will God know about the peace, when it comes?"

"He will know his children have stopped imagining the evil of war. And he will be very glad."

"Doesn't he know about the soldiers who are killed? What does he think they've died of?"

"He knows they are slain by their evil imaginings and those of their enemies. You see, God knows his children *believe* themselves to be at war, and that as long as they go on believing it they will hurt each other and themselves."

It seemed to Imogen that, in that case, God knew all that was really necessary about the war.

"Are you the only person, besides God, who doesn't believe in the war, grandpapa?" she presently enquired.

"No, my child. There are others. . . . Perhaps one day, when you are older, you will understand more about it, and try and think all evil and all pain out of existence."

"P'raps." Imogen was dubious. She did not quite get the idea. "Of course I'd *like* it, grandpapa, because then I shouldn't get hurt any more." She rubbed the back of her head, onto which she had fallen that afternoon while roller skating round the square. Her grandfather had told her that God didn't know she had fallen and hurt herself, and, in fact, that she was not really hurt at all. God didn't know a great deal about roller skates, Imogen concluded, if he didn't know that people who used them very frequently did fall. But perhaps he didn't know there were any roller skates; perhaps roller skates were another evil illusion of ours, like the war. Not a bad illusion; one we had better keep, bruises and all. But perhaps, thought

Imogen, who liked to think things out thoroughly, it was really that God didn't know that the contact of the human head with another hard substance caused pain. After all, people who have never tried *don't* know that. Babies don't. . . .

Imogen began to be afraid she was blaspheming. She put the problem later to her mother, but Vicky was less interested than her youngest daughter in metaphysical problems, and merely said, "Oh, Jennie darling, you needn't puzzle your head about what grand-papa tells you. Things that suit learned old gentlemen like him don't always do for little girls like you. Anyhow, don't ever you get thinking that it won't hurt you when you tumble on your head, because it always will. *You'll* never get rid of that illusion, you may be sure. What *you've* got to learn is not to be so careless, and not to spend all your time climbing and racketing about. So long as you'll do that you'll get tumbles, and they'll hurt, and don't you forget it."

Imogen sighed a little. Her mother was so practical. You asked her for doctrine and she gave you advice. Being married, and particularly being a mother, often makes women like that. They know that doctrine is no use, and cherish the illusion that advice is.

"Papa is very happy in this new no-evil religion he has," mamma said to Rome. "It suits him very well. Better than theosophy did, I think."

Papa's new religion might, from her placid, casual, considering tone, have been a new suit of clothes.

Papa's daughter-in-law, Amy, screamed with mirth over it. Christian Science seemed to her an excellent joke.

"Oh, you're not really hurt," she would say if her

daughter Iris came in from hockey with a black eye. "It's all an illusion! What do you want embrocation for? I'll tell your grandpapa of you. . . ."

"Christian Science," Maurice said to her at last, gloomily contemptuous, "is not much more absurd than other religions. Suppose you were to take another for your hourly jokes to-day, just for the sake of a change. It makes no difference which; you don't begin to understand any of them, and you can, no doubt, get a good laugh out of them all, if you try."

Amy said, "There you go, as usual! I suppose you'll be saying *you're* a Christian Science crank next. Anyway, I don't know what you want to speak to me in that way for, just because I like a little fun."

"I don't want to speak to you in any way," replied Maurice.

4

ON EDUCATION

Stanley, turning forty this year, was sturdier than of old, softer and broader of face, blunt-nosed, chubby, maternal, her deep blue eyes more ardent and intent. Now that her children, who were ten and eight, both went to day schools, she had taken up her old jobs, and was working for Women's Trade Unions, going every day to an office, sitting on committees, speaking on platforms. Phases come and phases go, and particularly with Stanley, who inherited much from her papa. Stanley was in these days a stop-the-war, pacifist Little Englander, anti-militarist, anti-Chamberlain, anti-Concentration Camp. She would shortly be a Fabian, but had not quite got there yet. She was, of course, a suffragist, but suffragists in 1901 were

still a very forlorn outpost; they were considered crankish and unpractical dreamers. She also spoke and wrote on Prison Reform, Democratic Education, Divorce Reform, Clean Milk and Health Food. She was an admirer of Mr. Eustace Miles' views on food, Mr. G. B. Shaw's drama and social ethics, Mr. G. K. Chesterton's romantic Christianity, and no one's political opinions. She believed in the future of the world, which was to be splendidly managed by the children now growing up, who were to be splendidly educated for that purpose.

"But how improbable," Rome mildly expostulated, "that they should manage it any better or any worse than everyone else has. Your maternal pride carries you away, my dear. Parents can never be clear-sighted; often have I observed it. Blessed, as the Bible says somewhere, are the barren and they that have not brought forth, for they are the only people with any chance of looking at the world with clear and detached eyes. And even they haven't much. . . . But why do you think the present young will do so unusually well with the future?"

"Of course," Stanley replied, "they won't do it of themselves. Only so far as they are educated up to it."

"Well, I can't see that educational methods are improving noticeably. Obviously democratic education is not at present to be encouraged by our governing classes. Look at the Cockerton case. . . ."

"It will come," said Stanley. "This new Bill won't go far, but it will do something. Meanwhile, those parents who have thought it out at all are doing rather better by their children than parents used to do. At least we can tell them the truth."

"So far as you see it yourselves. Is that, in most cases, saying much?"

"No, very little. But—to take a trivial thing—we can at least, for instance, tell them the truth about such things as the birth of life. That's something. Billy and Molly already know as much as they need about that."

"Well, they don't actually need very much yet, do they? I'm sure it won't hurt them to know anything of that sort, but I don't see exactly how it's going to help them to manage the world any better. Because, when the time comes for doing that, they'd know about the birth of life in any case. Boys always seem to pick it up at school, whatever else they don't learn. However, I admit that I think you bring up Billy and Molly very well."

"It's facing facts," said Stanley, "that I want to teach them. The art of not being afraid of life. They've got to do their share in cleaning up the world, and before they can do that they've got to face it squarely. One wants to do away with muffling things up, whatever they are. That's why I tell them everything they ask, so far as I know it, and a lot they don't. The knowledge doesn't matter either way, but the atmosphere of daylight does. I want them to feel there are no facts that can't be talked about."

"But, my dear, what a social training! Because, you know, there *are*. Anyhow in drawing-rooms, and places where they chat."

"They'll learn all that soon enough," Stanley placidly said. "The world is as vulgar as it is mainly because of its prudery. I'm giving my children weapons against that."

She had given them also a weapon against their

cousins, the children of Vicky, who had not been told Facts. Anyhow Imogen hadn't. Her sisters were older, and boys, as Rome had said, do seem to pick things up at school. But Imogen at thirteen was still in the ignorance thought by Vicky suitable to her years. So, when she exasperated her cousin Billy by her superior proficiency in climbing, running, gymnastics, and all active games—a proficiency natural to her three years' seniority but growing tiresome during a whole afternoon spent in trials of skill—Billy could at least retort, "I know something you don't. I know how babies come."

"Don't care how they come," Imogen returned, astride on a higher bough of the aspen tree than her cousin could attain to. "They're no use anyhow, the little fools. Who wants babies?"

Billy, having meditated on this unanswerable question, amended his vaunt. "Well, I know how puppies come, too. So there."

Imogen was stumped. You can't say that puppies are no use. She could think of no retort but the ancient one of sex insult.

"Boys are always bothering about stupid things like how babies come. As if it mattered. *I'd* rather know the displacement and horse-power and knots of all the battleships and first-class cruisers."

"You don't."

"I do."

"Bet you a bull's-eye you don't."

"Done. A pink one. Ask any you like."

"Well, what's the *Terrible*?"

"14,200 tons; 25,000 horse-power; 22.4 knots. That's an easy one."

"The *Powerful*."

"Same, of course. No, she only makes 22.1 knots. Stupid to ask twins."

Billy considered. He did not like to own it, but he could not remember at the moment any other ships of His Majesty's fleet.

"Well, what's the biggest, anyhow?"

"The *Dominion* and the *King Edward VII*. 16,350 tons; 18,000 horse-power; 18.5 knots."

"I don't know that any of that's true."

"You can look in 'Brassey' and find out, then."

"I don't care. Anyone can mug up 'Brassey.' Anyhow girls can't go into the navy."

Imogen jogged up and down on the light swinging branch, whistling through her teeth, pretending not to hear.

"And anyhow," added the taunter below, "*you'd* be no use on a ship, 'cause you'd be sick."

"I wouldn't."

"You would."

"I wouldn't."

"You would."

"You're sick yourself if you smoke a woodbine."

"So are you. *You're* sick if you squash a fly. Girls are. They can't dissect a rabbit. I can."

The sex war was in full swing.

"Boys crib at their lessons. Boys don't wash their necks."

"Nor do girls. You're dirty now. Girls don't play footer at school."

"Hockey's as good. Boys are greedy pigs; they spend their pennies on tuck."

"Who bought eight bull's-eyes this afternoon and sucked six?"

"Oh, well." Imogen collapsed into sudden good

temper. "Don't let's rot. Why did the gooseberry fool?"

To change the subject further, she swung herself backwards and hung from the branch by her knees, her short mop of curls swinging upside down, the blood singing in her head. Billy, a nice but not very clever little boy, said, "Because the raspberry syrup," and truce was signed. Who, as Imogen had asked, cared how babies came?

5

PING-PONG

Everywhere people ping-ponged. One would have thought there was no war on. Instead of doing their bits, as we did in a more recent and more serious war, they all ping-ponged, and, when not ping-ponging, asked, "Why did the razor-bill raise her bill? Why did the coal scuttle? What did Anthony Hope?" and answered, "Because the woodpecker would peck her. Because the table had cedar legs. To see the salad dressing," and anything else of that kind they could think of. Some people, mostly elderly people, could only answer vaguely to everything, "Because the razor-bill razor-bill," and change the subject, thinking how stupid riddles in these days were. Some people excelled at riddles, others at ping-pong, others again at pit, which meant shouting "oats, oats, oats," or something similar, until they were hoarse. No one would have thought there was a war on.

Indeed, there scarcely was a war on, now. Not a war to matter. Only rounding up, and blockhouses, and cordons, and guerilla fighting. Irving Garden had had enteric, and was invalided home. He meant

to return to South Africa directly peace should be signed, to investigate a good thing he had heard of in the Rand. His nephews and nieces, with whom he was always popular, worshipped at his shrine. He had wonderfully funny stories of the war to tell them. But he preferred to ask them such questions as, "What made Charing Cross?" and to supply them with such answers as, "Teaching London Bridge. Am I right?" Such questions, such answers, they found so funny as to be almost painful. Imogen and Tony would giggle until tears came into their eyes. Certainly Uncle Irving was amusing. And clever. He drove himself and other people about in a grey car that travelled like the wind and was cursed like the devil by pedestrians and horse-drivers on the roads. His brother Maurice cursed him, but good-temperedly, for he liked Irving, and, further, he despised the unenterprising Public for fools. That was why no section of the community gave Maurice and his paper their entire confidence. He attacked what he and those who agreed with him held for evils, but would round, with a contemptuous gesture, on those whose grievances he voiced. He ridiculed the present inefficiency, and ridiculed also the ideals of those who cried for improvement. He threw himself into the struggle for educational reform, and sneered at all reforms proposed as inadequate, pedestrian or absurd. He condemned employers as greedy, and Trade Unions as retrograde. He jeered at the inefficiency of the conduct of what remained of the war, at the stupid brutality of concentration camps, at the sentimentality of the Pro-Boer party (as they were still called), at the militarism of the Tory militants, the imperialism of the Liberals, and the sentimental radical humanita-

rianism of Mr. Lloyd George and his party. He addressed Stop-the-War meetings until they were broken up with violence by earnest representatives of the Continue-the-War party, and suffered much physical damage in the ensuing conflicts; yet the Stop-the-War party did not really trust him. They suspected him of desiring, though without hope, to stop not only the war but all human activities, and indeed the very universe itself; and this is to go further than is generally approved. The Continue-the-War party has risen and fallen with every war; but the Continue-the-World party has a kind of solid permanency, and something of the universal in its ideals. Not to be of it is to be out of sympathy with the great majority of one's fellows. At any time and in any country, but perhaps particularly in England in the early years of the twentieth century, when there was a good deal of enthusiasm for continuance and progress. The early Edwardians were not, as we are to-day, dispirited and discouraged with the course of the world, though they were vexed about the Boer War and the consequent economic depression of the country. They did not, for the most part, feel that life was a bad business and the future outlook too dark and menacing to be worth encouraging. On the contrary, they believed in Life with a capital L. The young were bitten by the dry reforming zeal of Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb, or the gay faith in life of Mr. G. K. Chesterton, or the bounding scientific hopefulness of Mr. H. G. Wells, or the sharp social and ethical criticism of Mr. George Bernard Shaw.

Stanley Croft, young for ever in mind, was bitten by all these and much more. Imperialism left slain behind, she embraced with ardour the fantastic ideal of the cleaning up of England. After the war;

then indeed they would proceed furiously with the building of Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land.

And meanwhile the war went on, and times were bad, and everywhere people ping-ponged. A lack of seriousness was complained of. It always is complained of in this country, which is not, indeed, a very serious one, but always contains some serious persons to complain of the others. "The ping-pong spirit," the graver press called the national lightness; and clergymen took up the phrase and preached about it.

The public, they said, were like street gamins, loafing about on the watch for any new distraction.

6

GAMIN

Imogen and Tony slipped out into the street. It was the first Sunday of the summer holidays, and the first day of August. The sun beat hotly on the asphalt, making it soft, so that one could dent it with one's heels. The children sauntered down Sloane Street, loitering at the closed shop windows, clinking their shillings in their pockets. They enjoyed the streets with the zest of street Arabs. They were a happy and untidy pair; the girl in a short butcher blue cotton frock, grubby with a week's wear, and a hole in the knee of one black-stockinged leg, a soiled white linen cricket hat slouched over her short mop of brown curls, her small pink face freckled and tanned; the boy, a year younger, grimy, dark-eyed and beautiful, like his Uncle Irving in face, clad in a grey flannel knickerbocker suit. Neither had dressed for the street

in the way that they should have; they had slipped out, unseen, in their garden clothes and garden grime, to make the most of the last day before they went away for the holidays.

They knew what they meant to do. They were going to have their money's worth, and far more than their money's worth, of underground travelling. Round and round and round; and all for a penny fare. . . . This was a favourite occupation of theirs, a secret, morbid vice. They indulged in it at least twice every holidays. The whole family had been used to do it, but all but these two had now outgrown it. Phyllis, now at Girton, had outgrown it long ago. "The two-penny tube for me," she said. "It's cleaner." "But it doesn't go *round*," said Imogen. "Who wants to go round, you little donkey? It takes you where you want to go to; that's the object of a train." It was obvious that Phyllis had grown up. She would not even track people in the street now. It must happen, soon or late, to all of us. Even Hughie, fifteen and at Rugby, found this underground game rather weak.

But Imogen and Tony still sneaked out, a little shamefaced and secretive, to practise their vice.

Sloane Square. Two penny fares. Down the stairs, into the delicious, romantic, cool valley. The train thundered in, Inner Circle its style. A half empty compartment; there was small run on the underground this lovely August Sunday. Into it dashed the children; they had a corner seat each, next the open door. They bumped up and down on the seats, opposite each other. The train speeded off, rushing like a mighty wind. South Kensington Station. More people coming in, getting out. Off again. Gloucester Road,

High Street, Notting Hill Gate, Queen's Road . . . the penny fare was well over. Still they travelled, and jogged up and down on the straw seats, and chanted softly, monotonously, so that they could scarcely be heard above the roaring of the train.

“Sand-strewn caverns cool and deep,
Where the winds are all asleep;
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam,
Where the salt weed sways in the stream,
Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
Dry their mail and bask in the brine;
Where great whales come sailing by,
Sail and sail with unshut eye,
Round the world for ever and aye,
ROUND THE WORLD FOR EVER AND AYE. . . .”

Then again, “Sand-strewn caverns cool and deep. . . .”

At Paddington they saw the conductor eyeing them, and changed their compartment. This should be done from time to time.

And so on, past King's Cross and Farringdon Street, towards the wild romantic stations of the east: Liverpool Street, Aldgate, and so round the bend, sweeping west like the sun. Blackfriars, Temple, Charing Cross, Westminster, St. James' Park, Victoria, SLOANE SQUARE. Oh, joy! Sing for the circle completed, the new circle begun.

“Where great whales come sailing by,
Sail and sail with unshut eye,
Round the world for ever and aye,
ROUND THE WORLD FOR EVER AND AYE. . . .”

Imogen changed her chant, and dreamily crooned:

"The world is round, so travellers tell,
And straight though reach the track;
Trudge on, trudge on, 'twill all be well,
The way will guide one back.
But ere the circle homeward hies,
Far, far must it remove;
White in the moon the long road lies
That leads me from my love."

Round the merry world again. Put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes. Round and round and round. What a pennyworth! You can't buy much on an English Sunday, but, if you can buy eternal travel, Sunday is justified.

But two Inner Circles and a bit are really enough. If you had three whole ones you might begin to feel bored, or even sick. Sloane Square again; the second circle completed. South Kensington. The two globe-trotters emerged from their circling, handed in their penny tickets, reached the upper air, hot and elated.

Now what? For a moment they loitered at the station exit, debating in expert minds the next move. Money was short: no luxurious joys could be considered.

Imogen suddenly gripped Tony by the arm.

"Hist, Watson. You see that man in front?"

Watson, well-trained, nodded.

"We're going to track him. I have a very shrewd suspicion that he is connected with the Sloane Square murder mystery. Now mind, we must keep ten paces behind him wherever he goes; not less, or he'll notice. Like the woman in Church Street did. He's off; come

on. . . . Do you observe anything peculiar about him, Watson?"

"He's a jolly lean old bird. I expect he's hungry."

"My good Watson, look at his clothes. They're a jolly sight better than ours. He's a millionaire, as it happens. If you want to know a few facts about him, I'll tell you. He moved his washstand this morning from the left side of his bed to the right; he forgot to wind up his watch last night; he went to church before breakfast; he had kidneys when he came in; and he's now on his way to meet a confederate at lunch."

"Piffle. You can't prove any of it."

"I certainly can, my good Watson. . . ."

"Golly, he's calling a hansom. Shall we hang on behind?"

Watson's beautiful brown eyes beamed with hope; Holmes' small green-grey ones held for a moment an answering gleam. But only for a moment. Holmes knew by now, having learnt from much sad experience, what adventures could be profitably undertaken and what couldn't.

"No use. We'd be pulled off at once. . . ."

Morosely they watched their victim escape.

Then, "Look, Watson. The fat lady in purple. She must have been to church. . . . Oh, quite simple, Watson, I assure you . . . she has a prayerbook. . . . Come on. It won't matter how late we get back, because they're having a lunch party and we're feeding in the schoolroom. We'll sleuth her to hell."

In this manner Sunday morning passed very pleasantly and profitably for Vicky's two youngest children.

7

AUTUMN, 1901

1901 drew to its close. An odd, restless, gay, unhappy year, sad with war and poverty, bitter with quarrels about inefficiency, concentration camps, Ahmednagar (the home of the Boers in India, and a name much thrown about by the pro-Boers in their "ignorant and perverse outcry"), education, religion, finance, politics, prisons, motor cars, and stopping the war; gay with new drama (Mr. Bernard Shaw was being produced, and many musical comedies), new art (at the New English Art Club), new jokes, new books (Mr. Conrad had published "Lord Jim," Mr. Henry James "The Sacred Fount," Mr. Hardy "Poems New and Old," Mr. Wells "Love and Mr. Lewisham," Mr. Yeats "The Shadowy Waters," Mrs. Chesterton "The Wild Knight," Mr. Kipling "Kim," Mr. Belloc "The Path to Rome," Lady Russell "The Benefactress," Mr. Laurence Housman "A Modern Antæus," Mr. Anthony Hope "Tristram of Blent," Mrs. Humphry Ward "Eleanor," Mr. Arnold Bennett "The Grand Babylon Hotel," Mr. Charles Marriott "The Column," Mr. George Moore "Sister Teresa," Mr. Max Beer-bohm "And Yet Again"), new clothes and new games.

Popular we were not. That prevalent disease, Anglophobia, raged impartially in every country except, possibly, Japan. Even as far as the remote Bermudas, continental slanders against us roared. We are a maligned race; there is no doubt of it. All races are, in their degree, maligned, but none so greatly as we—unless it should be the Children of Israel. It is sad to think it, but there must be something about us that

is not attractive to foreigners. They have always grieved at our triumphs and rejoiced at our sorrows. By the end of 1901 our friendlessness was such (in November Lord Salisbury said at the Guildhall, "It is a matter for congratulation that we have found such a friendly feeling and such a correct attitude on the part of all the great powers"), that we thought we had better enter into an alliance with the Japanese, who were still pleased with us for admiring them about their war with China.

In the autumn of this year, Stanley published her small book, "Conditions of Women's Work," and Mr. Garden, after years of labour, his mighty work, "Comparative Religions."

Mrs. Garden had influenza and pneumonia in December, and Mr. Garden, in an anguish of anxiety, called in three doctors and admitted that his faith had failed. God's disapproving ignorance of mamma's pneumonia made intolerable a burden of anxiety which would have been heavy even with Divine sympathy; and if, by some awful chance, mamma were to pass on, papa's grief, guilty and unrecognised, would have been too bitter to be borne. Christian Science had had but a brief day, but it was over. In a fit of reaction, papa became an Evangelical, and took to profound meditation on the suffering, human and divine, which he had for so long ignored. He now found the love of God in suffering, not in its absence.

Always honourable, he recanted the instructions on the limitations of divine knowledge which he had given to his grandchildren.

"You perhaps remember, Jennie my child, what I said to you last year about God's not knowing of the war. Well, I have come to the conclusion that I was

mistaken. I believe now that God knows all about his children's griefs and pains. He knows more about them than we do. Possibly—who knows—suffering is a necessary part of the scheme of redemption. . . .”

Imogen looked and felt intelligent. When anyone spoke of theology to her, it was as if the blood of all her clerical ancestors mounted to the call. She was nearly fourteen now, and had recently become an agnostic, owing to having perused Renan and John Stuart Mill. She was at the stage in life when she read, with impartial ardour, such writers as these, as well as E. Nesbit's "Wouldbegoods," Max Pemberton's "Iron Pirate," and other juvenile works (particularly school stories), Rudyard Kipling, Marryat, the Brontës, and any poetry she could lay hands on, but especially that of W. B. Yeats, Robert Browning, Algernon Swinburne, William Morris, Lewis Carroll and Walter Ramal.

She said to her grandfather, casually, but a little wistfully too, "I'm not sure, grandpapa, that I believe in God at all. The arguments against him seem very strong, don't they?"

Mr. Garden looked a little startled. Possibly he thought that Imogen was beginning too young.

"Ah, Jennie, my child—'If my doubt's strong, my faith's still stronger. . . .' That's what Browning said about it, you know."

Imogen nodded.

"I know. I've read that. I s'pose his faith was. Mine isn't. My *doubt's* stronger, grandpapa."

"Well, my child . . ." Mr. Garden, gathering together his resources, gave this strayed lamb (that was how, in his new terminology he thought of her) a little evangelical homily on the love of God. Unfortunately

Imogen had, then and through life, an intemperate distaste for evangelical language; it made her feel shy and hot; and, though she loved her grandfather, she was further alienated from faith. She wrote a poem that evening about the dark, terrifying and Godless world, which she found very good. She would have liked to show it to the others, that they too might find it good, but the tradition of her family and her school was that this wasn't done. One wrote anything one liked, if one suffered from that itch, but to show it about was swank. "Making a donkey of yourself." The Carringtons, shy, vain and reserved, did not care to do that.

"Some day," thought Imogen, "I'll write *books*. Then people can read them without my showing them. I'll write a book full of poems." The new poet. Even—might one dare to imagine it—the new *great* poet, Imogen Carrington. Or should one be anonymous? Anon. That was a good old poet's name.

"Few people knew," said Imogen, within herself, "that this slender book of verse, 'Questionings,' bound in green, with gold edges, which had made such a stir in lit'ry London, was by a wiry, brown-faced, blue-eyed young lieutenant-commander, composed while he navigated his first-class gunboat, the *Thrush* (805 tons, 1,200 h.p., 13 knots, 6 four-inch guns, 2 quick-firers, 2 machine), among the Pacific Islands, taking soundings. The whole service knew Denis Carton as a brilliant young officer, but only two or three—or perhaps a dozen—knew he was a poet too and had written that green book with gold edges that lay on every drawing-room table and was stacked by hundreds in every good bookshop." (I cannot account for the confused workings of this poor child's mind; I can only record the

fact that she still, and for many years to come, thought of herself, with hope growing faint and ever fainter, as a brown-skinned, blue-eyed young naval man.)

As to her religious difficulties, they were, after the first flush of unbelief, driven into the background of her mind by school, hockey, the Christmas holidays, and missing word competitions, and did not obtrude themselves aggressively again until the time came when her mother decided that she should be confirmed. She then said to her brother Hugh, now in the Fifth at Rugby, what did one do about confirmation if one believed Nothing? Hugh did not think it mattered particularly what one believed. One was confirmed; it did no harm; it was done; it saved argument. Himself, he believed very little of All That, but he had suffered confirmation, saying nothing. No good making fusses, and worrying mother. Jennie had much better go through with it, like other people.

"Well . . . of course, *I* don't care . . . if it's not cheating. . . ."

"Course it isn't. Cheating who? *They* don't care what we believe, they're not such sops. They only want us to do the ordinary things, like other people, and save bother. And, of course"—Hugh was a very fair-minded boy and no bigot—"there may be something in it, after all. Lots of people, quite brainy, sensible chaps, think there is. Anyhow, it can't hurt."

So Imogen was confirmed.

"Perhaps I shall be full of the Holy Ghost," she thought. "Perhaps there really *is* a Holy Ghost. Perhaps my life will be made all new, with tongues of fire upon my head and me telling in strange languages the wonderful works of God. . . . Perhaps. . . . But more prob'ly not. . . ."

8

1902

1902 was a great year, for in it the British Empire ceased its tedious fighting with the Boer Republics, and made a meal of them. So the Empire was the richer by so many miles of Africa, with the gold mines, black persons, and sulky Dutchmen appertaining thereto, and the poorer by so many thousand soldiers' lives, so many million pounds, and a good deal of self-confidence and prestige. Anyhow, however you worked out the gain and loss, here was peace, and people shouted and danced for joy and made bonfires in college courts. Thank God, *that* was over.

A wave of genial friendliness flowed from the warm silly hearts of Britons towards the conquered foe. Four surly enemy generals were brought to London; asked if they would like to see the Naval Review; declined with grave thanks; were escorted through London amid a cheering populace—"Our friends the enemy," cried the silly crowd, and "Brave soldiers all!" and surrounded them with hearty British demonstration and appeals for "a message for England." There was no message for England; no smiles; no words. The warm, silly Britons were a little hurt. The psychology of conquered nations was a riddle to them, it seemed. . . . "God, what an exhibition!" said Maurice Garden in his paper the next day.

Meanwhile King Edward VII had, after some unavoidable procrastination, been crowned, Mr. Horatio Bottomley had won a thousand pounds from the editor of the *Critic*, in that this editor had impugned his financial probity, and the Man with the Beflowered

Buttonhole (as they called him in the French press) whose Besotted Pride had caused to flow for three years so much Gold and Tears and Blood had received the Freedom of London for his services to his country. This year, also, Mr. Rudyard Kipling delighted athletes by his allusions to flannelled fools and muddled oafs, that ineffectual body the National Service League was formed, Germany and Great Britain began to eye each other's land and sea forces with an increase of hostile emulation which was bound to end in sorrow, and there was much trouble over bad trade and wages, unemployment, taxation and the Education Bill. Passive Resisters rose violently to the foray over this last, their Puritan blood hot within them, and would not pay rates for schools managed by the Church of England in which their nonconformist children were given Church teaching. It made a pretty squabble, and a good cry for Liberals, and why it was not settled by representatives of every sect which so desired being allowed access to the schools alternately is not now clear. The parliamentary mind moves in a mysterious way; it seldom adopts the simple solutions of problems which commend themselves to the more ingenuous laity. Anything to make contention and trouble, it seems to feel.

In such disputations 1902 wore itself away. And starving ex-soldiers played accordions or sold matches by the pavements, their breasts decorated with larger nosegays of war-medals than any one man-at-arms could conceivably have won by his own prowess in the field, for then, as after a more recent war, you could buy these medals cheap in second-hand shops. "Fought for my country" ran their sad, proud legends about themselves, "and am now starving. Have a wife and

sixteen small children. . . ." The families of ex-soldiers were terrific, then as now. A wretched business altogether.

9

EXIT MAMMA

Edwardianism was in full swing. People began to recover from the war. They became rich again, and very gay, and the arts flourished. Irving Garden, his fortune made in Rand mines, could really afford almost anything he liked. He bought and drove two motor cars, a grey one and a navy blue, and presented to Rome, on her forty-fourth birthday, a very graceful little scarlet three seater, in which she drove everywhere. Sometimes she drove her parents out, but the traffic made her papa nervous. Mamma was of calmer stuff, and sat placid and unmoved while her daughter ran skillfully like a flame between the monsters of the highway. She did not think that Rome had accidents; she believed in Rome.

Unfortunately mamma developed cancer in the spring of 1903, and died, after the usual sufferings and operations, in the autumn.

"It doesn't much matter," she said to Rome, hearing that her death was certain and soon. "A little more or a little less. . . . After all, I am sixty-nine. My only real worry about it is papa. We both hoped that I might be the survivor. I could have managed better."

Mamma's faint sigh flickered. Dear papa. Poor papa. Indeed, thought Rome, he will not manage at all. . . .

No charge was laid on Rome to look after poor papa. Mamma did not do such things; dying, she left the

living free. That ultimate belief in the inalienable freedom of the human being looked unconquered out of her tired, still eyes. Mamma had never believed in coercion, even the coercion of love. Modern writers say that Victorian parents did believe in parental tyranny. There is seldom any need to believe modern, or any other, writers. What they seem sometimes to forget is that Victorian parents were like any other parents in being individuals first, and the sovereign who happened to reign over them did not reduce all Victorians to a norm, some good, some bad, as the Poet Laureate of the day had put it, but all stamped with the image of the Queen. You would think, to hear some persons talk, that Victoria had called into existence little images of herself all over England, instead of being merely one very singular and characteristic old lady, who might just as well have occurred to-day. In short, the Victorians were not like Queen Victoria, any more than the Edwardians were like King Edward, or the Georgians are like King George, for all creatures are merely themselves.

Mamma, being merely herself, left her family free of all behests, and drew to her end with an admirable stoic gentleness. Dying was to her no great matter or disturbance.

Time bears us off, as lightly as the wind
Lifts up the smoke and carries it away,
And all we know is that a longer life
Gives but more time to think of our decay.

We live till Beauty fails and Passion dies,
And sleep's our one desire in every breath,
And in that strong desire, our old love, Life,
Gives place to that new love whose name is Death.

Mamma would sometimes murmur these lines by Mr. W. H. Davies, a poet (formerly Victorian, now Edwardian, later to become Georgian), of whom she was very fond, because he noticed all the charming things in the countryside that she always observed herself, such as wet grass, and rainbows, and cuckoos, and birds' eggs, and coughing sheep (who had always stirred her to pity).

"My beloved," papa would say, quietly, restraining his anguish that he might not distress her, "my best beloved, I shall join you before long, where there is no more parting. . . ." (Thank God, thank God, he was at this time a believer in that reunion, and could say it from his heart. Supposing he had still been a Theosophist, believing that mamma would merely go on to another spoke of the Eternal Wheel, and that he would never, try as he might, catch her up. . . . Or even a Roman Catholic, believing that mamma and he would both have to suffer a long expiation, presumably not together, in purgatory. Thank God, evangelicals believed in an immediate heaven for the redeemed, and surely papa and mamma would be found numbered among the redeemed. . . .)

Mamma's hand would gently stroke his.

"Yes, dear. Of course you will join me soon."

Who should see, who had ever seen, into mamma's mind that lay so deep and still beneath veils?

"Yes, Aubrey. Of course, of course. Quite soon, dear."

They spoke often of that further life; but of papa's life between now and then they did not dare to speak much.

Mamma loved papa, her lover and friend of half a century, and she loved all her children, and all her

grandchildren too, the dear, happy boys and girls. But at the last—or rather just before the last, for the end was dark silence—it was only her eldest son, Maurice, on whose name she cried in anguish.

“Maurice—Maurice—my boy, my boy! O God, have pity on my boy!”

Maurice was there, sitting at her side, holding her wet, shaking hand in his.

“Mother, mother. It’s all right, dear mother. I’m here, close to you.”

But still she moaned, “Have pity—have pity on my boy. . . . Maurice, my darling. . . . Have pity . . .” as if her own pain, cutting her in two, were his, not hers.

They had not known—not one of them had wholly known—of those storms that had beaten her through the long years because of Maurice, her eldest boy.

His tears burned in his hot eyes; the easy tears of the constant drinker.

They put her under an anæsthetic; the pain was too great; and she died at dawn.

IO

SPIRITUALISM

Papa could not bear it. It was all very well to talk of joining mamma before long, but papa was not more than seventy-three years of age, and how should he live without mamma for perhaps ten, fifteen, even twenty years? That unfailing comfort, sympathy and love that had been hers; that patient, silent understanding, that strength and pity for his weakness, that wifely regard for his scholar’s mind, that dear companionship

that had never failed—having had these for close on fifty years, how should he live without them? He could not live without them. Somehow, he must find them again—reach across the grave to where mamma's love awaited him in the land of the redeemed. . . . The redeemed. Already this evangelistic phraseology did not wholly suit his needs. He wanted mamma nearer than that. . . .

In 1904 there was, as usual, much talk of spiritualism, of establishing connection with the dead. The Psychical Research Society had been flourishing for many years, but papa had never, until now, taken much interest in it. There had been periods in his career when he had believed, with his Church, that God did not smile on such researches, or wish the Veil drawn from the unseen world, and that the researchers, if they too inquisitively drew it, got into shocking company, got, in fact, into touch with those evil spirits who were always waiting ready to pose as the deceased relatives and friends of enquirers. Other periods there had been when papa had believed that the thing was all pathetic buncombe (that was how papa spelt it), since there was unfortunately, nothing to get into touch with. But now he was sure that he had, in both these beliefs, erred. God could not frown on his bereaved children's efforts to communicate with the beloved who had made life for them. And beyond the Veil waited not the great nothingness, but God and the dear dead. God and mamma. He must and would get into touch with mamma.

Papa attended séances, with what are called Results. Mamma came and talked with him, through the voice of a table or of a medium; she said all kinds of things that only she could have said; she even told him where

a lost thimble of hers was, and sure enough, there it was, dropped behind the sofa cushions. And once materialisation occurred, and mamma, like a luminous wraith, floated about the room. It made papa very happy. He asked her how she did, and what it was like where she now was, and she told him that she did, on the whole, very well, but, as to what it was like, that he would never understand, did she tell him for a year.

"They can't tell us. It's too difficult, too different," the lady who managed the séances explained to papa afterwards. Papa did not greatly care for this lady, and he always winced a little at the thought that mamma had become "They." But he only said, "Yes, I suppose it is."

The séances exhausted him a good deal, but it was worth while.

"So long as it makes him happier," said Rome. "Poor *darling*."

II

THE HAPPY LIBERALS

1905 was a year of great happiness, intelligence and virtue for the Liberal party in the state. It was to be their last happy, intelligent or virtuous year for many a long day; indeed, they have not as yet known another, for such a gracious state is only possible to oppositions, and the next time that the Liberals were the Opposition it was too late, for by then oppositions were, like other persons, too tired, war-spoilt, disillusioned and dispirited to practise anything but an unidealistic and unhopeful nagging. But in 1905, with the Tories executing, to the satisfaction of their opponents, the ungracious

task of performance, which is, one may roughly say, never a success, the Liberals were very jolly, united, optimistic, and full of energy and plans. What would they not do when they should come, in their turn, into power? What Tory iniquities were there not, for them now to oppose, for them in the rosy future to reverse? What Aunt Sallies did not the governing party erect for them to shy at? Chinese labour, that yellow slavery which was degrading (were that possible) South Africa; the Licensing Act, the Education Act, the Little Loaf, which could be made so pitiable a morsel on posters—against all these they tilted. As to what they would do, once in power, it included the setting of trade again upon its legs, the enriching of the country, the reform of the suffrage, the relief of unemployment, the issue of an Education Bill which should distress no one. Ardent progressives hoped much from this party; they even hoped, without grounds, for the removal of sex disabilities in the laws relating to the suffrage, which unlikely matter was part of the programme drawn up in 1905 by the National Liberal Federation. Life was very glorious to any party, in those Edwardian days, before it got in. Liberals in opposition were democratic idealists, in office makeshift opportunists, backing out and climbing down.

Stanley Croft, in 1905, was ardent in Liberal hope. She hoped for everything, even for a vote. This sex disability in the matter of votes oppressed her very seriously. She saw no sense or reason in it, and resented the way the question, whenever it was raised in Parliament, was treated as a joke, like mothers-in-law, or drunkenness, or twins. Were women really a funny topic? Or rather, were they funnier than men? And if so, why? In vain her female sense of humour sought

to probe this subject, but no female sense of humour, however acute, has ever done so. Women may and often do regard all humanity as a joke, good or bad, but they can seldom see that they themselves are more of a joke than men, or that the fact of their wanting rights as citizens is more amusing than men wanting similar rights. They can no more see it than they can see that they are touching, or that it is more shocking that women should be killed than that men should, which men see so plainly. Women, in fact, cannot see why they should not be treated like other persons. Stanley could not see it. To her the denial of representation in the governing body of her country on grounds of sex was not so much an injustice as a piece of inexplicable lunacy, as if all persons measuring, say, below five foot eight, had been denied votes. She saw no more to it than that, in spite of all the anti-suffrage speakers whom she heard say very much more. She became embittered on this subject, with a touch of the feminist bitterness that marked many of the early strugglers for votes. She admitted that men were, taking them in the main, considerably the wiser, the more capable and the more intelligent sex; that is to say that, though most people were ignorant fools, there were even more numerous and more ignorant fools among women than among men; but there it was, and there was no reason why the female fools should have less say than the male fools as to which of the other fools represented their interests in Parliament, and what measures were passed affecting their foolish lives. No; on the face of it, it was lunatic and irrational, and no excuse was possible, and that was that.

It certainly was, Rome agreed, but then, in a lunatic and irrational world, was any one extra piece of lunacy

worth a fuss? Was, in fact, anything worth a fuss? In the answer to these questions, the sisters fundamentally differed, for Stanley believed very many things to be worth a fuss, and made it accordingly. She was busy now making fusses from most mornings to most evenings, sitting on committees for the improvement of the world, even of the Congo, and so forth. She was what is called a useful and public-spirited woman. Rome, on the other hand, grew with the years more and more the dilettante idler. At forty-six she found very few things worth bothering about. She strolled, drove or motored round the town, erect, slim and debonair, increasingly distinguished as grey streaked her fair hair and time chiselled delicate lines in her fine, clear skin. Rome cared neither for the happy Liberals nor for the unhappy Tories; she regarded both parties as equally undistinguished.

Fabianism became increasingly the fashion for young intellectuals. Girl and boy undergraduates flung themselves with ardour into this movement, sitting at the feet of Mr. Bernard Shaw and the Sidney Webbs. Stanley was a keen Fabian, and even attended summer schools. They were not attractive, but yet she hoped that somehow good would be the final goal of ill. She was sorry that none of her nephews and nieces joined her in this movement, though several had attained the natural age for it.

Maurice's Roger, who had not intellect and meant to be a novelist, was a gay youth now at Cambridge. His sister Iris had even less intellect and meant to be a wife.

Nature had not fitted her for learning, and when she left school she merely came out (as the phrase goes). Parties: these were what Iris liked. Society, not societies. Stanley, aunt-like, thought it a great pity that Maurice's offspring were thus, and blamed Maurice for leaving them too much to Amy. As to Vicky's children, Phyllis, who had done quite adequately at Girton, now lived at home and helped her mother with entertaining and drawing-room meetings, and was in politics on the whole a Tory; Nancy, at twenty-one, was at the Slade, learning, so everyone but her teachers believed, to draw and paint; Hugh was at Cambridge, a lad of good intelligence which he devoted to the study of engineering; Tony was still at school; and Imogen was to leave it this summer. Imogen was not for college; she would, it was generally believed by her teachers and relatives, not make much of that. Imogen was quite content; she was, as always, busy writing stories and sunk deep in her own imaginings, which were still of a very puerile sort. Imogen read a great deal, but was not really intelligent; it was as if she had not yet grown up. She knew and cared little about politics or progress. Bernard Shaw was to her merely the most enchanting of playwrights. She was happy, drugged with poetry (her own and that of others), and adventurous dreams. She was a lanky slip of an undeveloped girl, light-footed, active as a cat, but more awkward with her hands than any creature before her; at once a romantic dreamer and a tomboyish child, loving school, her friends, active games, bathing, climbing, reading and writing, animals, W. B. Yeats, Conrad, Kipling, Henry Seton Merriman, Shelley, William Morris, Stevenson, "A Shropshire Lad," meringues, battleships, marzipan, Irene Vanbrugh, Granville

Barker and practically all drama; hating strangers, society, drawing-room meetings, needlework, love stories, people who talked about clothes, sentimentalists, and her Aunt Amy. She was at this time as sexless as any girl or boy may be. She was still, in all her imaginings, her continuous, unwritten stories about herself, a young man.

As to Stanley's children, Irving's and Una's, they were still at school. Stanley watched her son and daughter with hope and joy; they were such delightful, exciting creatures, and one day they would take their place in the world and help to upset it and build it up again. *They*, at least, should certainly join the Fabians when they were old enough. Billy and Molly should not be slack, uninterested or Tory. They should join in the game of life as eagerly as now they joined in treasure hunts, that curious rage of this year which caused young and old to fall to digging up the earth, seeking for discs.

13

THE YEAR

The year and the government petered towards their end. In the east the Japanese were beating the Russians, hands down. In the Dogger Bank, the Russians fired on a fishing-fleet from Hull, and there was trouble. In European politics, the Anglo-French *entente* thrived, and Anglo-German rivalry swelled the navies. In Scotland, the Wee Frees split from the U.P.'s, and fought successfully for the lion's share of the loot. In Wales, Evan Roberts' odd religious revival swept the country, throwing strong men and women into hysteria and bad

men and women into virtue, reforming the sinners and seriously annoying the publicans. In the Congo, rubber was grown and collected amid scenes of distressing cruelty, and reports of the horrid business were published in this country by Mr. Roger Casement and Mr. E. D. Morel. In India, Lord Curzon quarrelled with Lord Kitchener. In Thibet, the British expedition got to Lhasa. In Tangier, the Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany made a speech. In Ireland, Mr. Wyndham resigned. In London, the government apathetically stayed in office, the Tariff Reform campaign raged, treasure discs were dug for, bridge was much played, the Vedrenne-Barker company acted at the Court Theatre, many books were published and pictures painted, and money brightly changed hands. And in the provinces, by-election after by-election was lost to the government, until at last, in November, Mr. Balfour resigned.

14

ROCKETS

They stood in the new open space at Aldwych, watching the election results proclaimed by magic lanterns on great screens and flung to the sky in coloured rockets. They had made up a family election party—Maurice, Vicky, Charles, Rome, Stanley and Irving, and many of their young. Stanley had brought Billy and Molly, that they might rejoice in the great Liberal victory and always remember it. She had bought them each, at their request, a little clacker, with which to signal the triumph of right to the world. For to-night was to be a triumph indeed; liberalism was to sweep the country. Though even Stanley did not guess to

what extent, or how far the inevitable pendulum had swung.

Imogen was entranced by the dark, clear night, the coloured lights, the crowd, the excitement, and little thrills ran up and down her as names and figures and rockets were greeted with cheers and hoots. She cared nothing for the results; to her the thing was a sporting event on which she had no money. Aunt Stanley, she knew, had her shirt on the Liberals. So had Uncle Maurice. But Aunt Rome had nothing either way. Imogen's own parents were Conservatives. So, on the whole, was Phyllis, and Phyllis's young man. So was Uncle Irving, who was for Tariff Reform. Probably, on the whole, Liberals were the more right, thought Imogen. But probably no party was particularly right. How excited they all got, anyhow, right or wrong!

The Liberals were forging ahead. There was another Manchester division going up on the screen. Three Manchester seats had already been lost to the Tories. "Bet you an even twopence it's a Lib." Tony was saying.

"Right you are. Oh, it's Balfour's. . . ."

"Well, he's lost it. Hand over."

The crowd roared with laughter, distress and joy. Balfour out. . . . What next?

"Very badly managed," Irving was complaining all the time, to no one in particular. "Shockingly mismanaged. The most comic election I ever saw. There'll be no Front Bench left."

"And a jolly good thing." That was Stanley, getting more and more triumphant. "There goes Brod-rick. . . ."

Imogen felt dazed and happy, and as if she were in

a fairy palace, all blue and red lights. Her upstrained face was stiff and cold, her mouth open with joy, so that the cold air flowed in. She wasn't betting any more, for neither she nor Tony would bet on the Tories now. The Tories were a dead horse. One was sorry for them, but one couldn't bet on them. Did the poor men who lost their seats mind much? Perhaps some of them were pleased. After all, they had none of them sought or desired office. . . . Statesmen always said that of themselves; they only wanted to get in because they thought they were the ones who would do most good; always they said that. Divine guidance, they said, had laid this heavy burden on them, though it was a most frightful bore, and though the thing they wanted to do was to live in the country and keep pigs.

"If I was in office," thought Imogen, "I wouldn't say that. I'd say, 'I sought and wanted office, and I'm jolly glad I've got it, though I expect I'll be rotten at it. I simply love being in power, and thank you awfully for putting me in, and I hope I'll stop in for ages.'"

How shocked everyone would be. That wasn't the way public men ever talked. Would women, if ever they got into Parliament, like Aunt Stanley wanted them to? Perhaps they would at first, not being used to proper public manners, but they would soon learn that it wasn't nice to talk like that and would begin on the I-never-wanted-it stunt.

More rockets; more blue flares. Lovely. Like a great garden of coloured flowers. *Night is a garden gay with flowers.* . . . Hours. Showers. Dowers. Bowers. Cowers. . . .

Their flaring blinds the sleepy hours. . . . No. *The*

small dim hours are lit, are starred. Better. The rhymes alternately in the middle and end of the lines, all through. That made it chime, like bells beneath the sea. . . .

"Lord, what a bungle!" Irving grunted. "It's all up now. Nothing can save it now. We may as well go home and get warm. What?"

His fine, dark, clear-cut face was beautiful in the coloured flares, as he stared up, a cigar in the corner of his mouth. How interesting people were, thought Imogen, the way they all wanted different things, and in different ways. There was Uncle Maurice now, smiling over his briar, as pleased as anything. . . . And Billy and Molly, silly little goats, twirling away with their clackers and shouting with Liberal joy because Aunt Stanley told them to. . . . Anyhow it couldn't really *matter* who got in. Not matter, like the night, and the lights, and poetry, and the lovely thrill of it all. Results didn't matter, only the thing itself.

"Brrr!" said Vicky, hunching herself together and hugging her muff. "It's too cold to watch the wrong side winning any more. Charles, I'm going home to bed. Come along, all of you, or you'll catch your deaths."

"Oh, mother, mayn't I stay as long as father does?"

"If you like. Very silly of you, Jennie, you're blue and shivering already. Stanley, aren't you going to take those noisy and misguided children of yours home? It's nearly midnight."

"I suppose I must. But what a night for them to remember always."

What a night, thought Imogen, huddling up in her coat with a happy shiver, to remember always. Indeed yes. Ecstasy and gaudy blossoms of the night. *The*

gaudy blossoms of the night. . . . Sharp swords of light. . . . Bloss, moss, doss, toss. . . toss ought to do. . . .

"There goes Lyttelton. So much for those beastly Chinamen," cried Maurice.

15

ON PARTIES

So much for the beastly Chinamen, and so much for the beastly little loaf and the tax on the People's Food, so much for class legislation and sectarian education bills. So much, in fact, for Toryism, for the happy Liberals were in, and would be in, growing ever less and less happy, for close on ten years.

"*Now* we'll show the world," said Stanley.

Maurice cynically grinned at her.

"If you mean you think you're going to get a vote, my dear, you're off it. This cabinet hasn't the faintest intention of accommodating you. Not the very faintest. And if ever they did put up a bill, they'd never get it through the Lords. You may send all the deputations you like, but you won't move them. Woman's suffrage is merely the House joke."

"We'll see," said Stanley, who was of a hopeful colour.

"All you can say of Liberals," said Maurice, who was not, "is that they're possibly (not certainly) one better than Conservatives. However, I'm not crabbing them. They've got their chance, and let's hope they take it. First they've got to undo all the follies the last government perpetrated. Every government ought

to begin with that, always. Then they've got to concentrate on Home Rule. As you say, we shall see."

"Anyhow," said Stanley, "we've got our chance. . . . And there's the *Tribune*. Penny liberalism at last."

"I give it a year," said Maurice. "If it takes longer dying, Thomasson is an even more stubborn lunatic than I think him. They've started all right; quite a good first number, only how any Liberal paper can publish a polite message from that damned Tsar beats one. I believe my paper is really the only one that insults the Russian government as it ought to be insulted. All the others either make up to the Tsar for his armies or butter him up because of the Hague Conference and his silly prattle about a world peace. It makes one sick. Liberals are as bad as the rest."

It was edifying, during the election days, to learn from various authorities the reasons for the Liberal victory. The *Times* said it was the effect, long delayed, of the suffrage reform bills; the working classes, at last articulate, had determined to dictate their own policy; no triumph for liberalism, no humiliation for conservatism, but an experiment on the part of Labour. The *Morning Post* said the victory was due to the misrepresentation of Chinese labour by Liberals, false promises, and the inevitable swing of the pendulum. The *Daily Mail* said it was the swing of the pendulum, Chinese labour, the over continuance in office of the last government, the Education Act, taxation, unfair food-tax cries, and a liking for antiquated methods of commerce. The *Daily News* said it was a rebellion against reaction, protection and the Little Loaf. The *Tribune* said it was a rebellion also against poverty, the direction of companies by Ministers, and the undoing

of the great Victorian reforms; it was, in fact, the protest of Right against Force, of the common good against class interest, of the ideal element in political life against merely mechanical efficiency. ("Mechanical efficiency!" Maurice jeered. "Much there was of that in the last government. As to the ideal element, the Liberal ideal is a large loaf and low taxes. Quite a sound one, but nothing to be smug about.") However, the whole press was smug, as always, and so were nearly all statesmen in public speeches; their cynicism they kept for private life. Mr. Asquith, for instance, said that this uprising of the people was due to moral reprobation of the double dealing of the late government; plain dealing was what they wanted. And Mr. Lloyd George, in his best vein, spoke of a fearful reckoning. A tornado, he called it, of righteous indignation with the trifling that had been going on in high places for years with all that was sacred to the national heart. The oppression of Nonconformists at home, the staining of the British flag abroad with slavery, the rivetting of the chains of the drink traffic on the people of this country—against all these had the people risen in wrath. It was a warning to ministers not to trifle with conscience, or to menace liberty in a free land. The people meant to save themselves; the dykes had been opened, and reaction in all its forms would be swept away by the deluge.

Mr. Balfour, less excited and more philosophic, observed, at his own defeat at Manchester, that, after all, the Tories had been in office ten years, and would doubtless before long be in office again, and that these oscillations of fortune would and did always occur. He was probably nearer the truth about the elections than most of those who pronounced upon them. It is

a safe assertion that no government is popular for long; get rid of it and let's try another, for anyhow another can't be sillier, is the voter's very natural and proper feeling. The sophisticated voter knows that it will almost certainly be as silly, but, after all, it seems only fair to let each side have its innings.

Anyhow, and whatever the reasons that brought liberalism into power, there it was. It was expressed by a House which was at present, and before its enthusiasms were whittled away in action, composed largely of political and social theorists, men new to politics and brimming with plans. Mr. H. W. Massingham said it was the ablest Parliament he had ever known, but not the most distinguished.

16

DREADNOUGHT

Imogen saved up her pocket money for the cheap excursion fare to Portsmouth, and slipped off there alone, on a raw February morning, by the special early train, to see the King launch the *Dreadnought*. The *Dreadnought* was a tremendous naval event. She displaced 19,900 tons, beating the *Dominion* and the *King Edward VII* by 1,200 tons, and she would make 21 knots to their 16.5, and had turbine engines, and carried ten 12-inch guns, and her outline was smooth and lovely and unbroken by casemates, for she was built for speed. Imogen had to go. She slipped off without a word at home, for she had a cough and objections would have been raised. She stood wedged for hours in a crowd on the docks in cold rain that

pitted the heaving green harbour seas, and coughed. She did not command a view of the actual launching, but would see the splendid creature as she left the slip and took the water. Before that there was a service; the service appointed to be used at the launching of the ships of His Majesty's Navy. "They that go down to the sea in ships: and occupy their business in great waters; These men see the works of the Lord: and his wonders in the deep. For at his word the stormy wind ariseth: which lifteth up the waves thereof. They are carried up to the heaven, and down again to the deep: their soul melteth away because of the trouble. They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man: and are at their wit's end. . . ."

After this, Hymn 592 (A & M) was irritating and silly, but hymns cannot be helped, bishops will have them.

Then the King smashed the bottle of wine on her and, christened, she took the water. She left the slip and came into the view of the crowd, and a great shout went up. "She's moving!"

Imogen, thrilled, gazed at the lovely, the amazing creature, the giant of the navy. What a battleship! With professional interest Imogen examined her points through her father's field glasses. No openings in the bulkheads—it was that which gave her her smooth, fleet look. She was made for a running fight. She was glorious.

Imogen travelled home wet through, shivering, her cough tearing at her chest, and went to bed for a month with bronchitis. So much for the navy, said Vicky crossly. But the amazing grey ship was a comfort to Imogen through her fevered waking dreams.

17

AT THE FARM

Imogen, bow and arrows in hand, crawled through the wood, beneath overhanging boughs of oaks and elders and beeches and the deep green arms of pines, that shut the little copse from the August sun into a fragrant gloom. Every now and then she stopped, listened, and laid her ear to the mossy ground.

"Three miles off and making a bee line south," she observed, frowning. "My God.

"Michael crawled on," she continued, "crawling, keeping his head low, so as not to afford a target for any stray arrows. Who knew what sinister shadows lurked in the forest, to right and to left? . . . Hist! What was that sound? Something cracked in the tangle of scrub near him. . . . A Cherokee on a lone trail, possibly. . . . A Cherokee: the most deadly of the Red Tribes. . . . Cold sweat stood out on Michael's brow. Could he reach the camp in time? Again he laid his ear to the ground and listened. They were only two miles now, and still that swift, terrible, traveling . . . The sun beat upon his head and neck; he felt dizzy and sick. Suppose he fainted before he reached his goal. . . . That damned cracking in the bushes again. . . . Good God! . . . out of the thicket sprang a huge Redskin, uttering the horrid war-whoop of the Cherokee, which, once heard, is never forgotten. Michael leaped to his feet, pulled his bow-string to his ear, let fly. . . ."

Imogen too let fly.

"Missed him," she muttered, and swarmed nimbly up the gnarled trunk of an oak until she reached the

lower boughs, from whence she looked down into a fierce red face, eagle-nosed, feather-crowned.

"Oh, Big Buffalo," she softly called. "Will you parley?"

Big Buffalo grunted, and they parleyed. If Michael would betray the whereabouts of his friends, Big Buffalo would grant him his life. If not, no such easy death as the arrow awaited him, "for we Cherokees well understand the art of killing. . . ." Michael, sick with fear, betrayed his friends, and Big Buffalo left him, primed with information. (In common with other heroes of fiction, Michael never thought of giving incorrect or misleading information.)

"Michael lay in the forest, his head upon his arms. What had he done? There was no undoing it now. Why didn't I choose the stake? Oh, damn, why didn't I . . ."

It was too warm, sweet and drowsy for prolonged remorse. Michael forgot his shame. The breeze in the pine trees sang like low harps. . . . The shadowy copse was soaked in piney sweetness, golden and dim. Michael, with his bow, his Redskins, and his broken honour, faded out in the loveliness of the hour.

Ecstasy descended on the wood; enchantment held it, saturating it with golden magic. Ants and little wood-beetles scuttled over Imogen's outstretched hands and bare, rough head. Rabbits bobbed and darted close to her. She was part of the woods, caught breathless into that fairy circle like a stolen, enchanted child.

"I am full of the Holy Ghost," said Imogen. "This is the Holy Ghost. . . ." And loveliness shook her, as a wind shakes a leaf. These strange, dizzy moments lurked hidden in the world like fairies in a wood, and at any hour they sprang forth and seized her, and the

emotion, however often repeated, was each time as keen. They would spring forth and grip her, turning the dædal earth to magic, at any lovely hour, in wood or lane or street, or among the wavering candles and the bread and wine. She was stabbed through and through with beauty sweet as honey and sharp as a sword, and it was as if her heart must break in her at its turning. After this brief intensity of joy or pain, whichever it was, it was as if something in her actually did break, scattering loose a drift of pent-up words. That was how poems came. After the anguished joy, the breaking loose of the words, then the careful stringing of them together on a chain, the fastidious, conscious arranging. Then the setting them down, and reading them over, and the happy, dizzy (however erroneous) belief that they were good. . . . That was how poems came, and that was life at its sharpest, its highest intensity. Afterwards, one sent them to papers, and it was pleasant and gratifying if other people saw them and liked them too. But all that was a side-issue. Vanity is pleasant, gratified ambition is pleasant, earning money is very pleasant, but these are not life at its highest power. You might at once burn every poem you wrote, but you would still have known life.

The song the pines hummed became words, half formed, drifting, sweet. . . . Imogen listened, agape, like an imbecile. It was a lovely, jolly, woody thing that was being sung to her . . . she murmured it over. . . .

A bell rang, far away. Sharply time's voice shivered eternity to fragments. Imogen yawned, got up, brushed pine needles out of her hair and clothes, took

up her bow, and strolled out of fairyland. It was tea-time at the farm.

As she sauntered through the little wood, she shot arrows at the trees and stopped to retrieve them. Then she found a long, sharp stick, pointed, like a spear, and became a knight in a Norman forest. She encountered another knight, a hated foe. There was a fight *à outrance*. They fenced, parried, lunged. . . .

"Swerve to the right, son Roger, he said,
When you catch his eye through the helmet's slit;
Swerve to the right, then out at his head,
And the Lord God give you joy of it. . . ."

A swinging thrust. . . .

"Got him, pardie!"

"Hullo."

Imogen faced about, and there, on the cart track between the wood and the home farm, stood her Uncle Ted, large and red in breeches and gaiters, his pipe between his teeth.

"Oh, hullo, Uncle Ted."

Imogen had turned red. She had been seen making an ass of herself alone in the wood. Behaving like a maniac. Damn.

"Anything the matter? Got the staggers, have you?" asked Uncle Ted, as if she were a cow.

"No, I'm all right. Looking for arrows and things, that's all."

"Oh, I see. . . . Comin' up to tea?"

They walked across the home field together. Imogen was sulky and ashamed. She was emptied of enchantment and the Holy Ghost, and was nothing but an abrupt, slangy, laconic girl, going sullenly in to tea,

feeling an ass. Uncle Ted was thinking farmer's thoughts, of crops and the like, not of Imogen.

But afterwards he said to Una, "Not quite all there, eh, that girl of Vicky's? Flings herself about in the wood when she's alone, like someone not right, and talks to herself, too. Nineteen, is she? It'd be right enough if she was twelve. But at eighteen or nineteen . . ."

"Oh, Imogen's all right. She's childish for her age, that's all."

Una took everyone for granted.

"Childish, yes. That's what I say. They ought to have her seen to. Gabbles, too. I can't make out half she's saying. . . . Katie may do her good, I daresay. Katie's got sense. . . . It's against a girl, going on like that. No sensible young fellow would like it. They ought to have her seen to. What?"

"Oh, she's all right," said Una again. "There she is in the field playing rounders with the others quite sensibly, you see."

"I daresay. She may be all right at games, but she oughtn't to be let loose alone in woods. She'll get herself talked about. . . ."

Katie too thought Imogen mad. But quite nicely mad. Harmless. Like a kid. Katie was a few months younger, but she felt that Imogen was a kid. She said and did such mad things. And she lacked the most elementary knowledge; she didn't know the first thing, for instance, about clothes, what they were made of, and how they should be made. She was like an imbecile about them; didn't care, either. She would stare, pleased and admiring, at Katie, who had beauty, as if Katie were a lovely picture, but she never said

the right things about her clothes. You'd think, almost, she didn't know one material from another.

When they had done playing rounders, and when Imogen and Tony, who was staying at the farm too, had done damming the brook at the bottom of the field, and when Tony had gone off rook shooting with his cousin Dick, Imogen sat by the brook, her bare muddy legs in a pool scaring minnows, and brooded over life. Rotten it was, being grown up. Simply rotten. Because you weren't really grown up. You hadn't changed at all. You knew some more, and you cared for a lot of fresh books, but you liked doing all the things you had liked doing before you grew up. Climbing, and playing Red Indians, and playing with soldiers, and walking on stilts. But when you put your hair up, you had to hide all sorts of things away, like a guilty secret. You could play real games, like tennis and cricket and hockey and rounders, and even football, and you could perhaps do the other things with someone else, but not alone. If people found you alone up a tree, or climbing a roof, or listening with your ear to the ground, or astride on a wall, or pretending with a sword, they put up their eyebrows and thought you an ass. Your mother told people you were a tomboy. A tomboy. Imbecile word. As if girls didn't like doing nice things as much as boys. Who started the idea they didn't, or shouldn't? . . . Oh, it was rotten, being grown up. Grown-up people had a hideous time. They became so queer, talking so much, wanting to go to parties, and even meetings, and all kinds of rotten shows. Mother held meetings in the drawing-room, for good objects. So did Aunt Stanley. Different objects, but equally good, no doubt. People came to the meetings and jabbered away, and

sometimes you were made to be there, "to learn to take an interest." Votes, cruelty to animals or children, sweated labour, bazaars, white slaves, the Conservative party, the Liberal party. . . . What did any of them matter? Phyllis was good at them. But now Phyllis was going to be married. And Nancy was at the Slade, and wouldn't attend the meetings; she was too busy drawing and going to dances and parties. The modern girl, mother said; independent, selfish, dashing about with young men and no chaperons. The Edwardian young woman, so different from the Victorian young woman. . . . Only Aunt Rome said she was not different, but just the same. . . . Anyhow, Nancy wouldn't take her turn at the meetings. So Imogen, younger and more docile, was being trained up. But she would never be any good. She hated them. Why shouldn't the boys take their turn? No one made them. It wasn't fair.

Imogen kicked viciously at the minnows. Rotten, being a girl. . . . Perhaps she would run away to sea . . . round the world . . . the South Sea Islands. . . .

It was getting chilly. Imogen drew her legs out of the brook and dried them on her handkerchief. Filthy they were, with mud. She put on her stockings and old tennis shoes, and wondered what next. Tony was still rooking. One might go and catch the colt in the meadow and ride him. . . .

Katie appeared over the hunched shoulder of the field.

"Imogen, do you want to come and milk? It's time. . . . Oh, I say, you *are* in a mess. You ass, what've you been up to?"

"Only damming the brook, and wading. Yes, I want to milk, rather."

"Hurry up then."

Katie was as beautiful as a June morning. As beautiful as Una. Pale as milk, with eyes like violets and dark, clustering curls. And clever. She could do nearly everything. Imogen, six months older, was as nought beside her. But Katie liked her, and was very kind to her. Katie had just left Roedean; she had been captain of the school hockey team, and was going now to play for Essex. A splendid girl. Imogen believed that Katie had none of the dark and cold forebodings, the hot excitements, the black nightmares, the sharp, sweet ecstasies, the mean and base feelings, that assailed herself, any more than Katie would be found making an ass of herself playing in a wood. Katie, like her mother, was balanced. This tendency to believe that others are balanced, and are not rent by the sad and glad storms which one's own soul knows, is common to many. One supposes it to be because human beings put such a calm face on things, so the heart alone knows its own turbulence.

Imogen grinned at Katie, and went with her to the milking.

18

HIGHER THOUGHT

Papa had aged very much in the last two years since mamma had died. He had had wonderful experiences; he had constantly spoken with, even seen, mamma; it had made him very happy. But he was aware that the séances greatly strained and fatigued him. He slept badly; his nerves seemed continually

on edge. Further, he could not by any means overcome the distaste he felt for the medium who made it her special business to open the door between him and mamma. A common little person, he could not help, even in his charity, thinking her. And Flossie, the spirit on the Other Side, who spoke for mamma (except on those rare occasions when mamma spoke for herself) was, to judge from her manner, voice and choice of language, even commoner. And silly. Papa scarcely liked to admit to himself *how* silly Flossie seemed to him to be. Mamma must dislike Flossie a good deal, he sometimes thought, but then recollected that, where mamma had gone to dwell, dislike was no more felt, only compassion. He would have liked to ask mamma, on the rare occasions when she spoke for herself, what she thought of Flossie, and of Miss Smythe, the medium on this side. But he did not like to, for Flossie would certainly, and Miss Smythe possibly, through her trance, hear his question and mamma's reply. How he longed for a little private talk, of the kind that mamma and he used to have of old! But he was not ungrateful. He was in touch with mamma; he knew her to be extant as a personality, and accessible to him, and that was surely enough. As to the fatigue, that was a small price to pay.

Then, one tragic day, in the autumn of 1906, came one of those great exposures which dog the steps of psychical men and women. Some of the sharp, inquisitive persons who make it their business to nose out frauds and write to *Truth* about them, turned their attention to Miss Smythe and her séances. In a few weeks—these things are very easy, and do not take long—Miss Smythe was pilloried in the press as a complete and accomplished fraud. She had, it was

made clear except to the most obstinate believers, never been in a trance, never called spirits from the vasty deep, never opened any spiritual doors. The mechanism of the materialisation was once more discovered and exposed . . . ("What a stale old story," said Rome. "As if we didn't know all about it long ago. These heavy-footed creatures, trampling over children's fairylands. Why can't they let things be?") . . . and even Flossie, that bright, silly, chatty spirit, was discredited. Flossie was a quack, and had known about the thimble behind the sofa and the other things in some cheap, sly way, or else just guessed.

Alas for papa! The gates of paradise clanged in his face; he might believe by faith that paradise was there, and mamma in it, but the door between him and it was shut. Great and bitter sorrow shook him, and shame, for that he had so made cheap his love and mamma's for the benefit of common frauds. He sank into inert grief, from which he was roused, in March 1907, by the call of Higher Thought. The name, in the first instance, appealed to him. Thought should be higher; it was usually lower, and very certainly much too low.

"Higher than what, papa dear?" Rome enquired. "These comparatives, in the air, are so unfinished. Higher education, higher criticism, the larger hope, the younger generation. . . . Higher, I mean than what other thought?"

Than the thought customary on similar subjects, papa supposed.

"These geometrical metaphors," Rome murmured. "Well, papa, I am sure it must be very interesting."

It was very interesting. Papa was introduced to a little temple near High Street, Kensington, which, when

you stepped on the entrance mat, broke into "God is Love" in electric light over the altar. Here he worshipped and thought highly, in company with a small but ardent band of other high thinkers, who were led in prayer by a Guru of immense power—the power of thought which was not merely higher but highest—over mind and matter. So great was the power of this Guru that he not only could cure diseased bodies and souls, but could correct physical malformations, merely by absent treatment. A lame young man was brought to him, one of whose legs was shorter than its fellow. Certainly, said the Guru, this defect would yield to absent treatment. Further, the treatment would in this case be doubly effective, as he happened to be about to make a journey to Thibet, to visit the Lama, the very centre of fervent prayer, absent treatment, and higher thought. The nearer the Guru got to Thibet, the more powerful would become, he said, the action of his treatment on the leg of the young man. And, sure enough, so it proved. The shorter leg began, as the Guru receded towards Asia, to grow. It grew, and it grew, and it grew. There came a joyful day when the two legs were of identical length. The power of absent treatment was triumphantly justified. But it proved to be a power even greater than the young man and his family had desired or deserved. For the short leg did not stop when it had caught up its companion; on the contrary, it seemed to be growing with greater velocity than before. And indeed, it was; for the Guru, now far beyond reach of communication by letter or telegram, was journeying ever deeper and deeper into the great heart of prayer, Holy Thibet, and as he penetrated it his prayer intensified and multiplied in power, like the impetus of a ball rolling down

hill. The short leg surpassed its brother, shot on, and on, and on. . . .

It was still shooting on when papa was told of the curious phenomenon.

"Strange," said papa. "Strange, indeed."

But it was not these portents, however strange, that papa valued in his new faith. It was the freedom, the prayerfulness, the rarefied spiritual atmosphere; in brief, the height. After Miss Smythe, after the darkened room and the rapping table and the lower thinking of poor Flossie, it was like a mountain top, where the soul was purged of commonness.

Mamma, papa sometimes thought, would have approved of Higher Thought; might even, had she been spared, have become a Higher Thinker herself. (It should be remembered, in this connection, that papa, since the exposure of poor Flossie, was no longer in touch with mamma.)

19

LIBERALS IN ACTION

It is a pity to crab all governments and everything they do. For occasionally it occurs that some government or other (its political colour is an even chance) passes some measure or other which is not so bad as the majority of measures. The Liberal government elected in 1906 composed tolerable bills more than once. It even succeeded, though more rarely, in getting them, in some slightly warped form, tolerated by the Upper House. The Trades Disputes Bill, for instance, got through. Either the Lords were caught napping, or they felt they had to let something through, just to show that things *could* get through, as at hoop-la the

owner of the booth has, here and there, among hundreds of objects too large to be ringed by the hoop, one of trifling value which can fairly be ringed and won, just to show that the thing can be done. Anyhow, the Trades Disputes Bill did get through, before the game began of chucking all bills mechanically back, or amending them out of all meaning so that the Commons disowned them and threw them away.

Mr. Birrell had no luck with his Education Bill. It was a good, rational bill, as education bills (a sad theme) go, and no party liked it much, and the Upper House saw that it would not do at all, and sent it back plastered all over with amendments that gave it a new and silly face, like a lady over-much made up. So the Commons would have none of it, and that was the end, for the moment, of attempts to improve the management of our elementary schools.

The Lords were now getting into their form, and threw out the Plural Voting Bill with no nonsense about amendments, and no trouble at all. After all, what were they there for, if not to throw out? What, indeed, asked the Lower House, many members of whom had for long wondered. As to any kind of Woman's Suffrage Bill, the Commons, as firmly as the Lords, would have none of it. It was when this was made clear that the Women's Social and Political Union, that new, vigorous and vulgar body, began to bestir itself, and to send bodies of women to waylay members on their way to the House; in fact, the militant suffragist nuisance began. There were processions, demonstrations, riots, arrests and imprisonments. Stanley threw herself into these things at first with dogged fervour; she did not like them, but held them advantageous to the Cause. Her niece, Vicky's Nancy,

a very wild young woman, who enjoyed fighting and making a disturbance on any pretext, threw herself also into the Cause, fought policemen with vigour, and was dragged off to prison with joy. Imogen wouldn't participate in these public-spirited orgies; she was too shy. And she couldn't see that it was any use, either. She had a hampering and rather pedantic sense of logic, that prevented her from flinging herself into movements with sentimental ardour; she preferred to know exactly how the methods adopted were supposed to work, and to see clearly cause and effect, and no one ever made it precisely clear to her how making rows in the streets was going to get a suffrage bill passed. It seemed, in fact, to be working the other way, and alienating some of the few hitherto sympathetic. Her Aunt Stanley told her, "It's to show the public and the government how much we care. They're crude weapons, but the only ones we have. Constitutional methods have failed, so far."

"But, Aunt Stanley, how do you know these are weapons at all?" Imogen argued.

"We can but try them," Stanley answered, herself a little doubtful on the point.

"Anyhow," she added, "anyhow, no woman who cares about citizenship can be happy sitting still and doing nothing while we're denied it. You do care about the suffrage, don't you, Imogen?"

"Oh, rather, Aunt Stanley, of course I do. I think it's awful cheek not giving it us. There's no *sense* in it, is there; no meaning. Anti-suffragists do talk a lot of rot. . . . Only don't you think suffragists do too, sometimes? I mean, Aunt Stanley, people do so, when they talk, get off the *point*, don't they. It would be a lot easier to be keen if people didn't talk so much.

They talk *round*, not along. Really, there's hardly anything to say about anything; I mean, you could say it all, all that mattered, in a few sentences. But people go on talking about things for hours, saying the same things twice, and a lot of other things that don't really apply, and everything in hundreds of words when quite a few would do. I noticed it in the House the other day when we were there. Two-thirds of what they all said was just flapping about. And they say, 'I have said before, Mr. Speaker, and I say again . . .' But *why* do they say it again? It isn't awfully good even the first time. I do wonder why people are like that, don't you?"

"Soft heads and long tongues, my dear, that's why. Can't be helped. One's got to bear it and go ahead. . . . I wish Molly was five years older; she'll be so tremendously keen. . . ."

Imogen said nothing to that. She knew Molly, her small elfish cousin of fourteen, pretty well. Molly, with her short white face and merry, narrow eyes, and quick wits and easy selfishness and charm, was, though Imogen couldn't know that, her father over again, without his abilities. Imogen was afraid that Molly, when she left school and grew up, was not going to take that place among the world's workers that Aunt Stanley hoped.

As to Billy, a cheerful, stocky Rugby boy of sixteen, he had no views on the suffrage. He didn't care. Politics bored him.

Poor Aunt Stanley. Aunt Stanley was a great dear; treated one always as a friend, not as a niece; explained things, and discussed, and said what she meant. She was easy to talk to. Easier than Vicky, whom one loved, but couldn't discuss things with; one couldn't

formulate and express one's ideas and project them into that spate of charming, inconsequent talk, that swept on gaily over anything one said. Imogen tried to please Aunt Stanley by seeming really keen about suffrage, but it was difficult, because the things she actually was keen on were so many and absorbing that they didn't leave much time over. Imogen felt that she was no good at these large, unselfish causes that Aunt Stanley had at heart; she hadn't soul enough, or brain enough, or imagination enough, or something. And she did hate meetings. If one had to sit indoors in the afternoon, were there not the galleries and theatres, her point of view was. Perhaps, she thought, Nancy, who enjoyed it, could do the votes-for-women business for the family.

Meanwhile, Mr. W. H. Dickinson's Suffrage Bill failed to come to anything, and it became obvious that the Liberal government, in this matter, was to be no use at all.

It was quite a question whether it was going to be much use in any other matter. Poor Law Reform it had postponed; likewise Old Age Pensions. Licensing Reform was dropped; so was Mr. McKenna's new Education Bill, the Land Valuation Bill, and Irish Home Rule. It looked as if the Liberal programme was running away like wax in the heat and trouble of the day. How few party programmes, for that matter, ever do become accomplished achievements! They are frail plants, and cannot easily come to fruit in the rough air of office. What with one thing, what with another, they wilt away in flower and die.

To make up for the stagnation of home politics, there was, in 1906 and 1907, plenty of international activity. The nations of Europe were ostensibly draw-

ing together, a happy family. British journalists were entertained in Berlin, German journalists in London, amid some mutual execration and dislike. A *rap-prochement* took place between ourselves and Russia, for it was quite the fashion in Europe to fraternise with Russia, her armies were so huge, even if not, apparently, very good at what armies should be good at. There were those in this country who held that it was not quite nice to fraternise with Russia, disapproving of her governmental system, and of the Tsar's very natural suppression of the Duma that had for a few days and by an oversight so strangely existed and actually dared to demand constitutional reform. There were those in Great Britain who said that we should not be at all friendly with a government so little liberal in mentality. But, after all, you must take nations as you find them, and their domestic affairs are quite their own concern, and one should not be provincial in one's judgments, but should make friends even with the mammon of unrighteousness for the sake of the peace of Europe, which was a good deal talked of just then by the Powers, though it is doubtful whether any of them really believed in it. It is certain that the nations by no means neglected the steady increase and building up of armaments by land and sea. They hurried away from the Hague Conference to lay down new battle-ships at a reckless pace; even Mr. W. T. Stead said, "Let us strengthen our navy, for on its fighting power the peace of Europe depends." Strengthen our navy we did; but as to the peace of Europe, that lovely, insubstantial wraith, she was perhaps frightened by all those armoured ships, all those noisy guns, all those fluent statesmen talking, for she never put on much flesh and bones.

20

1907

Outside politics, 1907 was a gay year enough. There was a severe outbreak of pageantitis, which many people enjoyed very much, and others found vastly disagreeable. Drama was noticeably good; the Vedrenne-Barker company moved from the Court to the Savoy, and the intelligent play-goer moved after it. Miss Horniman's Repertory Theatre toured the provinces; and the Abbey Theatre players took English audiences by storm. Acting was good, literature and the arts were much encouraged, dancing and social entertainments were more than ever the fashion. Society, it was said, was getting rowdier. For that matter, society has always been getting rowdier, since the dawn of time. How rowdy it will end, in what nameless orgies it will be found at the Last Day, is a solemn thought indeed.

As to the young they were thought of and written of much as ever, much as now. The New Young were discovered afresh, and the Edwardian variety was much like the Victorian and the Georgian. They were wild, people said; they went their own way; they were hard, reckless, independent, enquiring, impatient of control, and yet rather noble.

"Youth in the new century has broken with tradition," people said. "It is no longer willing to accept forms and formulæ only on account of their age. It has set out on a voyage of enquiry, and, finding some things which are doubtful, others which are insufficient, is searching for forms of experience

more in harmony with the realities of life and of knowledge. . . ."

Youth was, in fact, at it again.

"Girls are so wild in these days," Vicky cheerfully complained. "Nancy and Imogen both go on in a way we'd *never* have dared to do. Nancy dances all night (of course chaperons are a back number now), and comes home alone, or with some wild, arty young men and women, or, worse still, with one wild, arty young man, at five o'clock in the morning, and lets herself in with a bang and a rush, and often lets the arty young people in too. No, Nancy, I say to her, you don't let your friends into my house before breakfast, and that's that. Not several of them at once, nor one by herself or himself. If they don't want to go home to their own beds, they must just go and carouse in any hotel that will receive them, for in my house they shall *not* carouse. *Nor* sit on the dining-room sofa and smoke, and carry on conversations in tones that I suppose you all think are hushed. It shall not be done, I said, so that is settled. But is it settled? Not a bit of it. Nancy merely changes the subject, and Charles and I are woken by the hushed voices again next morning. Edwardian manners, people tell me; well, I'm Victorian, and I don't care if it *is* 1907."

"You were doing much the same in 1880, my dear," Rome interpolated.

"Oh, well, I've forgotten . . . were we? . . . Well, anyhow, you can't say I was behaving like Imogen. She doesn't care for dancing much, and she's such a baby still that cocktails make her tipsy and cigarettes sick; she prefers raspberry syrup and chocolate cigars, which is really more indecent at her age. At her age *I* was thinking of proper young-ladyish things, like young

men, and getting engaged; but Imogen seems never to have heard of either—I mean, not of young men in their proper uses. She plays childish games, and dashes about on her bicycle, and makes ridiculous lists of all the ships in the navy and how much they weigh and how many horses they're equal to, and slips off to Portsmouth all by herself to see them launched, without a word to anyone, and of course makes herself ill. I said to her one day, I suppose you'll go and marry into the navy some day, Jennie; nothing else will satisfy you. But she opened her eyes and said, *Marry* the navy? Oh, no. I couldn't do that. I should be too jealous of him. You see, I want to be in the navy myself, and I know I should hate his being in it when I couldn't. It would only rub it in. I want to do nice things myself, not to marry people who do them. I believe, mother, I'm perhaps too selfish to marry; it's *my* life I want to enjoy, not anyone else's. Besides, there might be babies, and they would get so in the way, little sillies. They wouldn't get in your way, I told her (only of course it isn't true, because they always do, the wretches), if only you'd behave like other grown girls, and not be forever climbing about and playing silly games. You're such a baby yourself, that's what's the matter. What on earth the child's book will be like that she's so busy with I can't imagine. *She* knows nothing about life, bless her. There's Phyllis married, and running her home so capably, and Nancy at least carrying on like a girl, not like a child in the nursery—but Imogen! I lose my patience with her sometimes."

And even as her mother spoke, Imogen was in Hamley's in Regent Street, looking at toy pistols and blushing. She was blushing because she had just been

deceitful, and was afraid that the lady attending on her guessed. "For what aged child is it?" this helpful lady had asked. "Would caps or blank cartridges be what he'd want? I mean, if he's *very* young. . . ."

"Oh, no," Imogen mumbled, "he's not awfully young. Blank cartridges, he likes. . . ."

She bent her abashed face over the weapons, fingering them. A sordid fib; was she seen through? She chose her pistol quickly, paid for it, and hurried out of the shop. When she got well away, she extracted the weapon from its cardboard box and tucked it, with a guilty look round, into the side pocket of her skirt.

She strode along with a new reckless gallantry.

"Patrick slipped among the crowd; that queer, cosmopolitan, rather sinister crowd that is to be found around the Marseilles docks. Was he followed? His hand strayed to his hip pocket. His keen, veiled eyes took in the passers-by without seeming to look. If he could get through the next hour without mishap, he would be aboard and a-sail. But could he? Prob'ly not. . . ."

While Imogen thus walked in foreign ports or trackless forests, a happy, dreaming spinster, a reckless adventurer armed to the teeth, many of her contemporaries and elders walked in suffragist processions, adventurers too, and no less absorbed than she. Stanley, disgusted now by the increasingly reasonless methods of the militants, had definitely turned her back on them and joined the constitutionals. These arranged orderly and lady-like processions, headed at times by Lady Carlisle.

"There can be no doubt," wrote the more dignified press, after one such procession, "that many of these lady suffragettes are absolutely in earnest, and honestly

believe that the cause for which they are contending is a just and sane one. But the fact remains that they are in the minority; that the sex, *qua* sex, is still content, and proud to be content, to accept the symbol of petticoat . . ." ("How indecent," cried Vicky, "to gossip about our underwear in a leader by a man!") . . . "the symbol of petticoat as the badge of disenfranchisement." Women, the article continued, are of low mental calibre, and will never understand politics, and if they did it would interfere with their only duty, the propagation of the race.

"I love journalists," said Rome, reading this to her papa at their Sunday breakfast. "They always write as if women did that job single-handed. They are so modest about man's share in it, which is really quite as important as ours. They even kindly call us the fount of life. Dear, generous, self-effacing creatures. . . ."

But papa was shaking his head, gravely.

"You make a joke of it, my dear. But this low mental equipment on the part of the writers on our leading papers is really a tragedy. The guiders of public opinion. . . . The blind leading the blind . . . how can we avoid the ditch?"

"Indeed, we don't avoid the ditch. We are all in it, up to the neck. But if one is to be sad on account of the low mental equipment of writers or others, there will be very little joy left. For my part, I find a considerable part of my joy in it; it assists in providing the cheering spectacle of human absurdity."

"Pass me the paper, my dear. I want to read about . . . I want to see it."

Rome smiled behind the screen of paper which papa put up between him and her. Well she knew what papa

wanted to read in it. He was looking for news of Mr. R. J. Campbell and his New Theology, searching for tidings of Pantheism and the Divine Immanence. And, sure enough, he found them. There was a Saying of the Week. Among the eminent persons who had said other things, such as Dr. Clifford, who had remarked, a little meiosisistically, "It is not necessary to burn a man who is seeking the truth," and the Lord Chief Justice, who had observed, more topically, "One of the greatest errors that motorists can make is to believe that upon their blowing their horns everybody should clear out of the way," and Prince Fushimi from Japan, who had said, "I do not wish to object to 'The Mikado,' as I am sure its writers did not intend to hurt the feelings of a great nation, but I shall, of course, be glad if it is not performed," and two doctors, one of whom had said, "Kissing consists in depositing some saliva on the lips or cheeks of another person," and the other, "Those who do not like milk will get cancer"—among all these utterers of truth came Mr. R. J. Campbell, remarking brightly, not for the first time nor for the last, "The New Theology is the gospel of the humanity of God and of the divinity of man."

"True," said papa, within himself. "Very true. Very proper and intelligent indeed."

He sighed gently behind the newspaper. He had had, of late, his doubts as to Higher Thought; as to whether it was very intelligent, very proper, or very true. It was strange in so many ways; high, doubtless, but perhaps for earth too high. And there were strange tales going about concerning the Gurus who led in prayer and in thought. And the leg of that unfortunate young man . . . how could people believe such nonsense? The element of folly in all human creeds

was becoming, in the case of the Higher Thought, painfully evident to papa.

This New Theology now—this young man Campbell—he seemed, somehow, nearer to solid earth than did the Higher Thinkers. He might talk of the Divinity of Man, but he did not, as papa, having read his book on the subject, knew, mean anything silly by it, only what all the mystics have meant—the divine spark in the human heart. As to the humanity of God—well, he probably meant no harm by that either. He was but an anthropomorphist, like the rest of us.

The theologians had been hard upon that book of his. It was not, of course, the book of a scholar; all it said had been said much better by Loisy and other Catholic modernists, whom Mr. Campbell palely reflected. But it gave a good peptonised version, suitable for the unscholarly mind. And its reviewers had been unkind. They had nearly all attacked it. Dr. Robertson Nicoll in the *British Weekly* had snubbed it at considerable length. The *Church Times* had said, "The book is one long offence against good taste," and the *Methodist Recorder*, "Frankly, we do not think this book worth reading, and to price it at six shillings is enough to make us join in the Book War." Theological reviewers were not always fair, as papa, since he had published his own mighty and erudite work on Comparative Religions, had known. For himself, he had liked Mr. Campbell's book, even though it was rather bright than scholarly, more an appeal to the man in the City Temple than to the student or the theologian. Papa, besides being a student and a theologian, had of late been also on Sundays a man in the City Temple. He had said nothing of it yet to anyone; he was trying it. He liked it; there was

nothing in it to bewilder or offend. The Divine Immanence; call it Pantheism who chose, it was a beautiful idea. It was in no degree incompatible with the Divine Transcendence; why should it be, since there was also the Divine Ubiquity?

Brooding on these matters, papa finished breakfast somewhat silently, and lit his pipe.

"A beautiful day," said Rome, smoking her cigarette at the open window. "I shall be out for lunch and tea, papa. I am joining a party of pleasure; we are going to explore, in our cars, to Newlands Corner, where we shall have trials of skill and of speed. You won't come with me, I suppose?"

"No, thank you, dear, I think not. I'm too old for trials of skill and speed; too old, even, for exploring."

Precisely, thought Rome, glancing at him with her indulgent smile, what papa was not and never would be. He would very surely go exploring this morning, searching the riches of the spiritual kingdoms. Much more exciting than Newlands Corner. . . . To papa at seventy-seven, as to Mr. R. J. Campbell at whatever age he might be, theology could still seem new. Rome wondered whether it was an advantage or a misfortune that to her, at forty-eight, all theologies, as most other of the world's businesses, seemed so very old. The only things that seemed new to her in 1907 were taximeter cabs.

"Well, good-bye, dear, and good luck," Rome wished her papa.

Of 1907 there is not very much more to record. Two or three items of news may perhaps be mentioned. Maurice's son Roger, aged twenty-four, now attached, at his own urgent desire, to the literary side of his father's paper—"He can't do much harm there, I sup-

pose," Maurice said, "though he'll not do any good either; he hasn't the brains.")—published a novel. It was a long novel, and it was about a youth not unlike what Roger conceived himself to be, only his home was different, for his father was a church-warden and bare the bag in church, and bullied and beat and prayed over his children; fathers in fiction must be like this, not heretical and intelligent journalists. The book conducted the youth from the nursery through his private and public schools (house matches, school politics, vice, expulsions, and so on), through Cambridge (the Union, the river, tobacconists' assistants, tripos), to journalistic, social and literary London, where it left him, at twenty-four, having just published his first novel, which was a great success.

"God, what tripe," Maurice commented, but to himself, as he turned the pages. "Exactly what the boy *would* write, I fear. No better, no worse. Well, poor lad, he's pleased with it enough. And it will probably be handsomely reviewed. It's the stuff to give the public all right." His thoughts strayed to a familiar, rather bitter point. If he had been given (by Amy: how fantastic a thought!) a son with brains; a son with a hard, clear head or an original imagination; a son who, if he wrote at all, wouldn't produce the stuff to give the public, a son who, like himself, would see the public damned first . . .

Roger was, as his father had predicted, handsomely reviewed, for the Edwardians rather liked the biography-of-a-young-man type of novel, and loved details of school life. Roger had his feet well on the ladder of successful fiction-writing. Roger would be all right. Meanwhile, his head swelled even larger than before. His father perceived that the innocent youth really be-

lieved his reviewers, and conceived himself to be a writer and a clever young man.

The other items I record of the year 1907 I quote from the diary of Imogen for the 16th of March.

"Indomitable launched, Glasgow. Largest and quickest cruiser in the world. 17,250 tons. 41,000 h.p. 25 knots. *Invincible* and *Inflexible*, same type, building. Finished book, began to type it. Got guinea prize from *Saturday Westminster* for poem."

21

WHITHER?

And so to the last years of Edwardianism. In them that gay, eager, cultivated period listed gently to the political left. The Socialist Budget, as it was called by its opponents, "the end of all things" as Lord Rosebery a little optimistically called it, agitated the country. Old Age Pensions were at last established, to the disgust of Tories, who had, however, when members of Parliament, to be careful how they expressed their disgust, for fear of their needy constituents. "Whither are we drifting?" enquired the Conservative press, in anger and fear. "Here is Socialism unabashed: the thin end of the wedge which shall at last undermine the integrity and liberty of our Constitution." Here were sixty millions a year, not insurance but a free dole, squandered on supporting old persons who might just as well be supported in workhouses. What would that come to in Dreadnoughts? Anyhow, we had got to lay down six or seven Dreadnoughts a year for the present, if we were to be to Germany in the ratio of two keels to one, which was assuredly essential. "They

are ringing their bells; they will soon be wringing their hands," said the Tory leaders. The Radical element in the government strengthened; Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman died, and in Mr. Asquith's ministry Mr. Lloyd George was Chancellor of the Exchequer. But it remained, on the whole, a Liberal-Imperialist government, and left most of the radicalism to Labour, whose parliamentary strength was increasing and unifying. Wherever we were drifting, it was not towards extreme radicalism.

As to Ireland, a bill was passed to reduce her docks, thistles and noxious weeds: no other bill.

Parliamentary affairs and party politics were no more exciting and no more tedious (for that is impossible) than usual. Of more interest were the first flying machines that really flew, the drawings of Mr. Augustus John exhibited at the New English Art Club and condemned by all critics (except the few who liked the kind of thing), as essays in a savage and childish archaism, and deliberate insults to our intelligence; (whither indeed was art drifting, when such drawings could be praised?); and the establishment of the White City at Shepherds Bush, with the Franco-British Exhibition (sadly dull) and flip-flaps, switchbacks, wigglegoggles and scenic railways (most exciting, and an insidious snare for pocket money; you could get rid there in one evening of the careful hoardings of weeks; also, if you were as weak in the stomach as Imogen, you felt repentant after a few goes). Thither President Fallières, on a visit to King Edward, was taken, to enjoy the Franco-British Exhibition and cement the *entente cordiale*, which, however, needed it less than now, for the Edwardians were on the whole most enthusiastic about this international understanding.

"There is no longer a Channel," they said, publicly and politely; but in their hearts, for they were no more foolish than we, they still gave thanks for this useful, if unpleasing, strip of sea.

To forge faster the other link in the Triple Entente, that only possible guarantee for a world peace, King Edward visited the Tsar of all the Russias, at Reval. So there we were, grasping these two great military powers by the hand, ready to face any emergency. We had got ahead of Germany in this matter of Russia. For all the European Powers, discreetly averting their eyes from the chronic blood stains on the bear's savage claws, were courting her for her legions. To have the bear at their beck and call—that was what everyone wanted, against the emergencies which might arise. And never was a time when emergencies seemed more imminent, more dangerous, more frequent; such a state of simmering unrest was Europe's in the days of Edward the Peacemaker. Of the Kaiser Wilhelm and his Uncle Bertie it has been said that their relations "lapsed into comparative calm only when they were apart from one another." Their subjects hated and feared each other; the press in each country stirred up terror of invasion by the other; "the German invasion," "the English invasion"—these phrases were bandied about in two jealous, frightened empires. The German spy scare, the British spy scare, these fevers were worked up in the jingo press of two countries. "You English are mad, mad, mad," said Wilhelm. "I strive without ceasing to improve relations and you retort that I am your arch-enemy. You make it very hard for me."

For that matter, nations always make it hard for one another; it is their function. We did make it hard

for Germany, and Germany made it hard for us, and France made it hard for everyone.

Anyhow, here was the Triple Entente, full-armed, to meet the Triple Alliance, and some one or other would see to it that they did meet before long.

The chief European emergency which arose at the moment was an attack of megalomania on the part of Serbia, in 1909. The Serbs had the madness to dream of a greater Serbia, which should unite the scattered peoples of their race—"a dream," said the English press, "as hopeless as that of Poland *rediviva*. Greater Serbia either will be realised under the sceptre of the Hapsburgs, or will not be realised at all." The awkwardness of the situation, so far as we were concerned, was that Russia was, as usual, backing her mad little militant friend, and had to be dissuaded with great tact from upsetting the apple cart. However, a joint note to Serbia from the Powers quieted her for the time being, and the lid was shut down temporarily on the seething European kettle of fish.

Other intriguing matters of this year were the building, in British dockyards, of three huge battleships for Brazil, which disgusted others than young Imogen Carrington; the Olympic Games in July; the publication of various not unamusing books; and the deaths of two old men, Algernon Swinburne and George Meredith. Our two greatest Grand Old Men had departed from us, and no more would pilgrims alight at the Pines, Putney, or go exploring to Box Hill. The office of our literary G. O. M. was filled now only by Mr. Thomas Hardy, for Mr. Henry James was still an American. Sometimes one speculates, aghast, what would happen should we ever be left with no candidates for that honourable post—that is to say, with no cele-

brated literary man or woman (for there might, though improbably, be a G. O. W. some day) over seventy years, no Master for the younger writers to greet on the festival of his birth. It would be an undignified state of affairs indeed; and one need not anticipate it at present, for behind Mr. Hardy there looms more than one candidate of respectable claims.

The closing years of this reign were brightened further by Commander Peary and Dr. Cook, who both maintained that they had discovered the North Pole. It was ultimately decided that only the Commander had done so, as the doctor had had the misfortune to mislay his papers in Greenland; but his was a sporting venture, and deserving of all applause, and he had a good run for his money.

And so an end to Edwardianism. The new Georgianism dawned on a nervous, gay, absorbed nation, experimenting in new but cautious legislation, alive, on the whole, to new literature and new art, alive wholly to whatever enjoyment it could find, and thoroughly tied up in continental politics, so that when that mine was fired we should go up with it sky-high.

PART IV

GEORGIAN

FIRST PERIOD: CIRCUS

I

THE HAPPY GEORGIANS

THE first Georgiar years, the years between 1910 and 1914, are now commonly thought of as gay, as very happy, hectic, whirling, butterfly years, punctuated indeed by the too exciting doings of dock and transport strikers, Ulstermen, suffragists, the *Titanic*, and Mr. Lloyd George, but, all the same, gay years. Like other generalisations about periods, this is a delusion. Those years only seem especially gay to us because, since July, 1914, the years have not been gay at all. Really they were quite ordinary years. In fact, it is folly to speak of these insensate seasonal periods as happy or the reverse. It is only animate creatures which can be that, and it is unlikely that all, or the majority, of animate creatures should be visited by circumstances making for pleasurable emotion or the reverse at the same time as one another, except in the case of some great public event. Some early Georgians were gay, some sad, some bored, some tepid and indifferent, as at any other time.

Nevertheless, it so happened that the persons in this so-called narrative were all quite sufficiently happy during this period. They were all having, in their several ways, a fairly good time.

2

PAPA

Mr. Garden's way was, it need scarcely be said, a spiritual way. He was now over eighty, and his was the garnered fruit of a long life of spiritual adventure. He had believed so much, he had believed so often, he had fought with doubt so ardently and with such repeated success, he had explored every avenue of faith with such adventurous zeal, that he had at last reached a table-land from whence he could survey all creeds with loving, impartial pleasure. Even Mr. Campbell's New Theology had not enmeshed him for long; he passed through it and out of it, and it took its place among the ranks of Creeds I Have Believed.

And now, in some strange, transcendent manner, he believed them all. Nothing is true but thinking makes it so; papa thought all these faiths, and for him they were all true. What, after all, is truth? An unanswerable riddle, to which papa replied, "The truth for each soul is that faith by which it holds." So truth, for papa, was many-splendoured, many-faced. God must exist, he knew, or he could not have believed in Him so often and so much. The sunset of life was to papa very lovely, as he journeyed westward into it, murmuring, "I believe. . . . I believe. . . ." Catholicism (Roman and Anglo), Evangelicism, Ethicism, Unitarianism, Latitudinarian Anglicism, Seventh-Day Adventism, Christian Science, Irvingitism, even poor Flossie and her chat, he did very happily and earnestly believe. He believed in a mighty sacramental Church that was the voice of God and the store-house of grace; he believed that he was saved through private

intercourse and contract with his Lord; he believed in the Church established in this country, and that it should be infinitely adaptable to the new knowledge and demands of men; he believed that the world was (very likely) to be ended in a short time by the second coming of Christ; he believed that God was love, and evil a monstrous illusion; he believed that God permitted the veil between this world and the next to be rent by the meanest and most trivial of His creatures, if they had the knack. Indeed, papa might be said to have learnt the art of believing anything.

Irving said it was pleasant to find that papa was once again an Irvingite. Indeed, the creeds after which he had named his children now all flourished in papa's soul. No longer did he shake his head when he remembered in what spiritual moods he had named Una, and Rome, or sigh after that lost exultation of the soul commemorated in Vicky. Had another child been given to him now he would have named it Verity, in acknowledgment of the fact that nearly everything was true.

What wonder, then, that papa was a happy Georgian?

3

VICKY

Vicky, dashing full-sail through her fifties, was a happy Georgian too. She was handsome in her maturity, and merry. People she loved, and parties, and gossip, and bridge, and her husband and children, and the infants of her daughter Phyllis, and food and drink and clothes, and Ascot, and going abroad, and new novels from Mudie's, and theatres and concerts and

meetings and causes, and talk, talk, talk. Life, she held, is good as you get on in it; a broad, sunny, amusing stream, having its tiresome worries, no doubt, but, in the main, certainly a comedy. Vicky as an early Georgian was a generously fashioned matron, broader and fuller than of old, with her fair skin little damaged by time, and not much grey in her chestnut hair, which she wore piled in a mass of waves and curls, in the manner of the early Georgian matrons. A delightful woman, with an unfailing zest for life. You couldn't exactly discuss things with her, but she could and did discuss them with you. She would tell you what she thought about the world and its ways in a flow of racy comment, skimming from one topic to another with an agile irrelevance that grew with the years. A merry, skimming matron; certainly a happy Georgian.

4

MAURICE

Maurice had not, since he married Amy, been a happy Victorian or Edwardian, and he did not become an exactly happy Georgian, but he was happier than before. In his fifties he was no nearer accepting the world as he found it than he had ever been. It still appeared to him to be a hell of a place. He was, in his fifties, a lean, small, bitter man, his light hair greying on the temples and receding from the forehead, his sensitive mouth and long jaw sardonically, cynically set. He was popular in London, for all his bitter tongue and pen; he and his paper were by now an institution, known for their brilliance, clarity, hard, unsentimental intolerance, and honesty. You might dis-

agree with Maurice Garden; you might even think that he had an evil temper and a habit of mild intoxication; but you had to respect two things about him, his intelligence and his sincerity. Tosh and slush he would not stand, whether it might be about the Empire, about the poor suffragists in prison who would not eat, about White Slaves (whom his paper called, briefly and precisely, prostitutes, holding that the colour of their skins was an irrelevant point to raise when considering the amelioration of their lot), about the poor tax-robbed upper classes, or the poor labour-ground lower. He would print no correspondence couched in sentimental terms; if people desired to write about the sufferings, say, of birds deprived of their feathers for hats, they had to put it in a few concise words, and to say precisely what steps they wished to see taken about it. No superfluous wailings or tears were permitted, on any topic, to the writers in the *Gadfly*. The editor had a good deal of trouble with the literary side of his paper, which inclined, in his opinion, to roll logs, to be slavishly in the fashion in the matter of admiring the right people, to accept weak articles and rubbishy poems from people with budding or full-blown reputations, and, generally, to be like most literary papers. His son Roger he did not for long permit to adorn the literary staff; to do so would have been, in view of the calibre of Roger's intelligence, gross nepotism. Roger had to get another literary job on a less fastidious paper; meanwhile, to his father's disgust, he continued to produce novels, and even began on verse, so that he appeared in current anthologies of contemporary poetry. Also, he got married. So did his sister Iris. That settled, and his children well off his hands, Maurice felt that his only and dubious link with family life

was snapped, and that he was free to go his own way. He left his wife, offering to provide her with any material she preferred for a divorce, from a mistress to a black eye. Amy accepted the offer, and these two victims of a singularly unfortunate entanglement found rest from one another at last. It was, Amy complained, too late for her to marry again; of course Maurice, selfish pig, had waited till it was too late for her but not for him. But Maurice had no inclination to remarry; he had had more than enough of that business. The only woman he had ever seriously loved had married ten years ago, ending deliberately an unhappy, passionate and fruitless relationship. Maurice's thoughts were not now woman-ward; he lived for his job, and for interest in the bitter comedy of affairs that the world played before him. His silly, common, nagging wife, his silly, ordinary, disappointing children, no more oppressed him; they could, for him, now go their own silly ways. He was free.

5

ROME

Rome was a happy Georgian. For her the comedy of the world was too amusing to be bitter. She, in her splendid, idle fifties, was known in London as a lady of wits, of charm, of humour; a gentlewoman of parts, the worldly, idle, do-nothing, care-nothing sister of the busy and useful Mrs. Croft, contributing nothing to the world beyond an attractive presence, good dinner-table talk, a graceful zest for gambling, an intelligent, cynical running commentary on life, and a tolerant, observing smile. Life was a good show to

her; it arranged itself well, and she was clever at picking out the best scenes. When, for instance, she had an inclination to visit the House of Commons, she would discover first on which afternoon the Labour members, or the Irish, were going to have a good row, or Mr. Lloyd George was going to talk like an excited street preacher, or Sir Edward Carson like an Orangeman, or any other star performer do his special turn, and she would select that afternoon and have her reward. Our legislators were to her just that—circus turns, some good, some poor, but none of them with any serious relation to life as lived (if, indeed, any relation with that absurd business could be called serious, which was doubtful).

So the cheerful spectacle of a world of fools brightened Rome's afternoon years. Before long, the folly was to become too desperate, too disastrous, too wrecking a business to be a comic show even to the most amused eyes; the circus was, all too soon, to go smash, and the folly of the clowns who had helped to smash it became a bitterness, and the idiot's tale held too much of sound and fury to be borne. But these first Georgian years were, to Rome, twinkling with bland absurdity. She cheered up Maurice in the matter of that prose and verse by means of which his son made of himself a foolish show, reminding him that we all make of ourselves foolish shows in one way or another, and the printed word was one of the less harmful ways of doing this. It was no worse, she maintained, to be a Georgian novelist and poet than any other kind of Georgian fool, and one kind or another we all are. After all, he might be instead a swindling company-promoter. . . .

"No," said Maurice. "He hasn't the wits. And, you know, I don't share your philosophy. I still believe, in the teeth of enormous odds, that it is possible to make something of this life—that one kind of achievement is more admirable—or less idiotic, if you like—than another. I still think bad, shallow, shoddy work like Roger's damnable, however unimportant it may be. It's a mark on the wrong side, the side of stupidity. You don't believe in sides, but I do. And I'm glad I do, so don't try to infect me with your poisonous indifference. I am a man of faith, I tell you; I have a soul. You are merely a cynic, the basest of God's creatures. You disbelieve in everything. I disbelieve in nearly everything, but not quite. So I shall be saved and you will not. Have a cocktail, Gallio."

6

STANLEY

Stanley's son was at Oxford, reading for a pass, for it was no manner of use, they said, his reading for anything more. He was a nice boy, but not yet clever. "Not yet," Stanley had said of him all through his schooldays, meaning that Billy was late in developing. "Not yet," she still said, meaning that he was so late that he would not have developed properly until his last year at Oxford, or possibly after that. Not that Billy was stupid; he was quite intelligent about a number of things, but not, on the whole, about the things in books, which made it awkward about examinations. Nor was he intelligent about politics; in fact, politics bored him a good deal. However, he was destined

for a political career. Stanley's cousin, Sir Giles Humphries, a Liberal member of Parliament, had promised Stanley to take Billy as a junior secretary when he left Oxford, if he should show any capacity for learning the job. Billy's Liberal political career would thus be well begun. Meanwhile, Billy was an affectionate, companionable boy, who hid his boredom and his ignorance from his mother as well as might be, and very nicely refrained from making mock of militant suffragists in her presence, for, though Stanley had ceased to be a militant, many of her friends were, in these years, in and out of prison.

Molly wouldn't go to college. No one, indeed, but her mother suggested that she should. She was obviously not suited, by either inclination or capacities, for the extension of her education. Stanley would have been glad to have Molly at home with her when she left school, for Molly had the heartbreaking charm of her father, even down to his narrow, laughing eyes and odd, short face. Stanley adored Molly. Molly was tepid and casual about votes, and had no head for books, and not the most rudimentary grasp on public affairs, and she was worse at meetings and causes than any girl in the world. She didn't even pretend, like Billy. She would laugh in Stanley's face, with her incomparable impudence, when Stanley was talking, and say, "Mumsie darling, stop committing. Oh, mumsie, not before your chee-ild," and flutter a butterfly kiss on Stanley's cheek to change the subject. And she wanted to go on the stage. She wanted to go, and went, to a dramatic school, to learn to act. Well, better that than nothing, Stanley sighed. If she *does* learn to act, it will be all right. If she doesn't, she's learn-

ing something. If it doesn't make her affected and stupid, like actresses, I don't mind. And surely nothing can make Molly less than entrancing. But, whatever comes of it, Molly has a right to choose her own life; it's no business of mine what the children decide to do. In her conscious reaction from the one-time parental tyranny over daughters, Stanley forgot that there might also be tyranny over sons, and that Billy too had a right to choose his own life. It is creditable to Billy that she could forget it. Billy was the best of sons.

Meanwhile Stanley was fighting (constitutionally) for votes, women's trade unions, the welfare of factory girls, continuation schools, penal reform, clean milk, and the decrease of prostitution. It may be imagined that all these things together kept her pretty busy; unlike Rome, she had no time to visit Parliament on its best days; she only went there when one of the topics in which she was interested was going to be raised. She got thus, Rome told her, all the dry bread and none of the jam. However, Stanley preferred the dry bread days, though they were invariably stupid and disappointing.

Though only a very little of all she had at heart got done, Stanley was happy. She laboured under the delusion that the constitution and social condition of her country were, on the whole, faintly on the upward plane. That was because she was unfairly biased towards the Liberal party in the state, and too apt to approve of the measures they passed. She approved of Old Age Pensions; she even approved, on the whole, of Mr. Lloyd George's Insurance Act; and she approved of the People's Budget very much.

7

IRVING

Irving was nearly always cheerful, except when he was cross. Irving was like that. He had been a cheerful Victorian and a cheerful Edwardian, and was now, in his late forties, a cheerful Georgian. He had a beautiful and charming wife, creditable children, a house in Devonshire and a house in London, and a great deal of money (though the super-tax robbed him of much of it), two motor cars, good fishing, shooting and stag-hunting, and an excellent digestion. He had his troubles. The People's Budget troubled him a good deal, and the Land Taxes, and all the unfair socialist legislation to which he was subject. He sometimes threatened to go and live abroad, to escape it. But he did not go and live abroad. He was, for all his troubles, a happy Englishman.

8

UNA

Una, too, was cheerful. She was unaffected by reigns and periods. She was a very unconscious Georgian. Not like Stanley, who said, "We are now Georgians. Georgian England must be much better than any England before it," nor like Roger, who would murmur, "We Georgians face facts" . . . nor like Vicky, who cried, "I will *not* be called a Georgian; not while that little Welsh horror rules over us." Una hardly knew she was a Georgian, and, indeed, she was not, in any but a strictly technical sense. Her mind

was unstirred by what used, long ago, to be called the *Zeitgeist*. She was happy; she enjoyed good health; her daughters were like polished corners and her sons like young plants; her husband's acres flourished and his corn and wine and oil increased (as a matter of fact his wine, always a trifle too much, had of late years decreased; Ted was a soberer man than of old); Katie, their handsome eldest, had married well; and Una found in the countryside the profound, unconscious content that animals find. Riding, walking, gardening, driving about the level Essex lands, she, attuned to the soil on which she lived, was happy and serene.

9

IMOGEN

The younger generation of Georgians were happy enough. They were married, engaged, painting, writing, dancing, at the bar, at the universities, at school. They were behaving in the several manners suitable to their temperaments and years. Their lives were full of interests, artistic, literary, athletic and social. Vicky's Nancy was learning to paint futuristically; she had now a little studio in Chelsea, where she could be as Bohemian as she liked, and have her friends all night without disturbing anyone. Night-clubs, too, had of late come in, and were a great convenience. Phyllis was bringing up her children. Hugh, eating dinners in the Temple, read of torts and morts, but dreamed of machinery, and drew diagrams in court of pistons and valves, and jotted down algebraic formulæ when he should have been jotting down legal notes. Hugh was really a mechanician, and his heart was not

in law, though he liked it well enough. His brother Tony had gone from Cambridge to the Foreign Office and, when not writing drafts, was a merry youth about town.

Imogen was happy. She felt her life to be pleasure-soaked; a lovely, an elegant orgy of joy. And pleasure, orgies of dissipation even, did not absorb her, but were ministrants to the clear, springing life of the imagination. Imagination brimmed the cup of her spirit like golden wine. She felt happy and good, like a child in an orchard, ripe apples and pears tumbling in soft grass about her, the silver boat of the moon riding in a green sky. For her birds sang, sweet bells chimed and clashed, the stars made a queer, thin, tinkling song on still and moonless nights. The people hurrying about the city streets and squares were kind and merry and good, like brownies; the city itself was a great gay booth, decked and lit. Dawn came on a golden tide of peace; noon drove a flaming chariot behind the horses of the sun; evening spread soft wings, tender and blue and green; night was sweet as a dream of apple-blossoms by running water. When she wrote, whether by day or by night, her brain felt clear and lit, as by a still, bright taper burning steadily. Her thoughts, her words, rose up in her swiftly, like silver fishes in a springing rock pool; round and round they swam, and she caught them and landed them before they got away. While she wrote, nothing mattered but to seize and land what she saw thus springing up, to reach down her net and catch it while she might. Verse she wrote, and prose, with growing fastidiousness as to form and words. When she had first begun publishing what she wrote, she had been too young; she had fumbled after style like a blind puppy; she

had been, like nearly all very young writers, superfluous of phrase, redundant. She read with fastidious disgust in her first book of stories such meaningless phrases as, "He lifted the child bodily over the rail and dropped it into the sea." Bodily; as if the victim might, on the other hand, have been only caught up in the spirit, like St. Paul. What did I mean, she asked, across the years, of that bungling child, knowing that she had indeed meant nothing. But now style, the stark, bare structure of language, was to her a fetish. It was good to be getting on in life—twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six—so that one's head was clearer, if not yet very clear. The very young, thought Imogen, are muddled; they love cant and shun truth; they adopt and use imitative phrases; they are sentimental and easy idealists behind their masks of cheerful, slangy hardness. Undergraduates, male and female, and their non-collegiate contemporaries, are the most obscurantist of reactionaries; facts annoy them and they pretend they do not see them, preferring to walk muffled through life, until life forcibly, year by year, tears the bandages from their eyes. The later Georgian, the post-war very young, were to be even more sentimental, muffled and imitative than their predecessors, because of the demoralising war, which was to give them false standards in the schoolroom. But the pre-war adolescents were sentimental enough.

The sharp, clear and bitter truth—that was the thing to aim at, thought Imogen, in her twenty-fifth year, knowing she was still far, but not knowing how far, from that. That courageous realism which should see things as they were, she desired, knowing herself to be still a false seer, blinded and dazzled by her personal circumstances, warped and circumscribed in her vision

by the circle of her life. Perhaps she was too comfortable, too happy. . . . Or perhaps, like most people, too emotionally alive, strung too sharply to every vibration, for the clear, detached intellectuality she craved.

I feel things too much, she thought, smiling, to be thinking what so many people thought, what too many even said, of themselves.

I don't feel things much. I am not easily moved by life. . . . Why did people so seldom say that, and so much more seldom think it? No doubt because everyone feels things terrifically, is quite horribly moved by this most moving business, life. No one believes him or herself to be insensitive, for no one is insensitive, life not being an affair it is possible to be insensitive to.

In a deeper layer of consciousness, where herself watched herself, Imogen thought that, though she might believe herself to be sensitive to life, she at any rate knew why she believed it, knew why everyone believed it of himself, and that redeemed her from the commonplace boast, and gave her over the people who say, "*I feel too much, that's where it is,*" the advantage that the conscious must always have over the unconscious, the advantage, if it be one, that is perhaps the main difference between sophisticated and primitive forms of life.

Meanwhile Imogen, like her cousin Roger, wrote and published verse and prose. After all, it didn't matter what one wrote. People wrote and wrote, and nearly every kind of thing got written by someone or other, well or ill, usually ill, and never so well as to touch more than the very outside edge of the beauty and adventure which was life. Written words opened the door, that was all. Beyond the door lay the adventure,

bright and still and eerily clear, like a dream. Strange seas, purple with racing currents in the open, but under the eaves of coral islands green and clear like jade; white beaches of those same islands, hot in the sunshine under the spreading leaves of bread-fruit trees; yams and cocoanuts and pineapples dropping with nutty noises on to emerald-green grass; a little boat moored at the edge of the lapping, creamy waves; witty monkeys and brilliant parrots chattering in the jungle; a little fire at night outside the tent, and a gun ready to one's hand. Great fishes and small fishes swimming deeply in the jade rock pools, sailing and sailing with unshut eye; the little boat sailing too, pushing off into the wide seas dotted with islands, white wings pricking sky-ward like fawns' ears. Or deep orchards adrift with blossom, rosy-white; jolly colts in paddocks, dragging with soft lips and hard gums at their mothers' milk; the winds of April hurtling the cloud shadows across the grass. Long lanes running between deep hedges in the evening, and the rustle of the sea not far, and the velvet dusk waiting for the moonrise, and queer, startled noises in the hedges, and quiet munching noises in the fields, and the cold mocking stars looking down. And painted carts of gypsies, and roadside fires, and wood-smoke and ripe apples. And hills silver and black with olives and cypresses, and steep roads spiralling up them to little walled towns, and hoarse, chanted songs lilting among vineyards, and the jingling of the bells of oxen. And the streets and squares of rainbow-coloured towns, noisy cafés and lemon trees in tubs, beautiful men noble with the feathers of cocks, beautiful women in coloured head-kerchiefs, incense drifting out of churches into piazzas, coffee roasting in deep streets. To swim, to sail, to run naked on hot

sands, to lie eating and eating in deep scented woods, and then to sleep; to wake and slip into clear brown pools in sunshine, to spin words as a spider his silvery web; to wear a scarlet silk jacket like a monkey's and little white trousers, and, for best, a little scarlet crinoline over them, sticking out, very wide and short and jaunty, and a scarlet sunshade lined with white, and on one's shoulder a tiny flame-red cockatoo, and at one's heels two little black slaves, shining and black as ebony, with ivory teeth a-glisten and banjos tucked beneath their arms. To clap one's hands, twice, thrice, and presto! an elegant meal—mushrooms, cider and *pêche melba*, and mangoes and pineapple to end it, and then, when it was ended, a three-coloured ice. What joy! Dear God, what a world! What adventure, what loveliness, what dreams! Beauty without end, amen.

Then why write of what should, instead, be lived? Wasn't the marvellous heritage, the brilliant joke, the ghostly dream, of life enough? Nevertheless, one did write, and was, inexplicably, praised for it. Black marks on paper, scribbled and niggled and scrawled—and here and there the splendour and the joke and the dream broke through them, like sunshine flashing through prison bars, like music breaking through the written notes.

While she gave to the fashioning of the written word all the fastidious, meticulous austerity of devotion that she knew, Imogen in her personal life was not austere or fastidious or devoted at all. She idled; she lounged about; she was slovenly; she bought and sucked toffee; she read omnivorously, including much trash; she was a prey to shoddy, facile emotions and moods, none of which had power to impel her to any action, because

a deep, innate scepticism underlay them all; she was a sentimental cynic. She loved too lightly and too slightly; she was idle, greedy, foolish, childish, impatient and vain, sliding out of difficulties like a tramp who fears a job of work. She did not care for great causes; public affairs were to her only an intriguing and entertaining show. She was a selfish girl, a shallow girl, a shoddy girl, enmeshed in egotism, happy in her own circus, caring little whether or no others had bread. Happy in her circus, and yet often wretched too, for life is like that—exquisite and agonising. She wanted to go to the Pacific Islands and bathe from coral reefs; wanted money and fame; wanted to be delivered for ever from meetings and tea-parties, foolish talkers and bores; wanted to save a life, watched by cheering crowds; wanted a motor bicycle; wanted to be a Christian; wanted to be a young man. But not now a naval man; she had seen through the monotony and routine of that life. She wanted in these days to be a journalist, a newspaper correspondent, sent abroad on exciting jobs, to report wars, and eruptions of Vesuvius, and earthquakes, and Cretan excavations, and revolutions in South America, and international conferences.

IO

ON PUBLISHING BOOKS

From time to time Imogen, in common with many others, brought out books, large and small. They would arrive in a parcel of six, and lie on the breakfast table, looking silly, in clownish wrappers with irrelevant pictures on them. Imogen would examine them with mild distaste. How common they looked, to be

sure, now that they were bound! As common as most books, as the books by others. Dull, too. What if all the reviews said so? One couldn't help caring what reviews said, however hard one tried not to. It was petty and trivial to be cast up and cast down by the opinions of one's fellows, no wiser than oneself, expressed in print, but so it was. Why? Chiefly because they *were* expressed in print, to be read by all. One's disgrace, if it were a disgrace, was so public. People who didn't know that reviewers were just ordinary people, with no more authority or judgment than they had themselves, believed them. If people read in a review, "It cannot be said that Miss Carrington has been successful in her new book of stories," they thought that it really could not, not knowing that almost anything can, as a matter of fact, be said, and often is. And if a reviewer said (as was more usual, for reviewers are, taking them all in all, a kindly race), "This is a good book," people who didn't know any better really thought that it was so. Then the author was pleased. Particularly as the book wasn't really good in the least.

"I can't say I am much concerned about my reviews, one way or another," Roger had once said to Imogen. But he *was* concerned, all the same. Did he, did all the people who said they didn't mind things, know that they really did? Or were they indeed deluded? People were surely often deluded; they said such odd things. "It's not that I mind a bit for myself, it's the principle of the thing," they would say. Or, "I don't care a damn what anyone says of me," or, "It isn't that *I'd* mind taking the risk, but one has to think of other people." And the people who said, "I know you won't mind my saying . . ." when they knew you would,

or, "I don't want to spread gossip, but . . ." when that was just what they did want, or, "You mustn't think I'm vexed with you, dear," when they left you nothing else to think.

Did these lie? Or were they deceived? Imogen, pondering these apparently so confused minds in her own, which was more approximately accurate (for she would deceive others, but could not easily deceive herself), could not decide.

II

ON SUNDAY WALKS

On Sundays the early Georgians used to go from London in trains, getting out somewhere in Surrey, Sussex, Bucks or Herts, to walk in muddy lanes or over blown downs, or through dim green-grey beech-woods or fragrant forests of pine. It is pleasanter to walk alone, or with one companion, or even two, but sometimes unfortunately one walks (and so did the early Georgians) in large groups, or parties of pleasure. Imogen found that she occasionally did this, for it was among the minor bad habits of her set. It did not greatly matter, and these strange processions could not really spoil the country, even though they did very greatly talk. How they talked! Books, politics, personal gossip, good jokes and bad, acrostics, stories, discussions—with these the paths and fields they traversed echoed. But Imogen, like a lower animal, felt stupid and happy and alone, and rooted about the ditches for violets and the hedges for nests, and smelt at the moss in the woods, and broke off branches to carry home. To herself she would hum a little tune,

some phrase of music over and over again, and sometimes words would be born in her and sing together like stars of the morning. But for the most part she only rooted about like a cheerful puppy, alive with sensuous joy. Her companions she loved and admired, but could not emulate, for they were wise about things she knew not of. Even about the fauna and flora of the countryside they really knew more than she, who could only take in them an ignorant and animal pleasure. She had long since guessed herself to be an imbecile, and, with the imbecile's cunning, tried to hide it from others. What if suddenly everyone were to find out, discover that she was an imbecile, with a quite vacant, unhinged mind? If these informed, educated, sophisticated people should discover that, they would dismiss her from their ken; she would no more be their friend. She would be cast out, left to root about alone in the ditches, like a shameless, naked, heathen savage.

As she thought about this, someone would come and walk by her side and talk, and she would pull herself together and pretend to be passably intelligent, albeit she was really drunk with the soft spring wind and the earthy smell of the wood.

12

ON MARRIAGE

Imogen loved lightly and slightly, her heart not being much in that business. Life was full of stimulating contacts. She admired readily, and liked, was interested, charmed and entertained. Men and women passed to and fro on her stage, delightful, witty, grace-

ful, brilliant, even good, and found favour in her eyes. Poets, politicians and priests, journalists and jesters, artists and writers, scholars and social reformers, lovely matrons, witty maids, and cheerful military men, toilers, spinners, and lilies of the field—a pleasant, various crowd, they walked and worked and talked. So many people were alluring, so many tedious, so many tiresome. One could, unless one was careless, evade the tedious and the tiresome. But supposing that one had been very careless, and had married one of them? What a shocking entanglement life might then become! How monstrously jarring and fatiguing would be the home!

“Whether one marries or remains celibate,” Imogen reflected, in her pedantic, deliberating way, “that is immaterial. Both have advantages. But to marry one of the right people, if at all, is of the greatest consequence for a happy life. People do not always think intelligently enough on this important subject. Too often, they appear to act on impulse, or from some inadequate motive. And the results are as we see.” For she was seeing at the moment several ill-mated couples of her acquaintance, some of whom made the best of it, others the worst. Many sought and found affinities elsewhere, for affinities they must (or so they believed) have. Others, renouncing affinity as a baseless dream, wisely accepted less of life than that, and lived in disillusioned amenity with their spouses.

An amazing number of marriages came, on the other hand, off, and these were a pleasant sight to see. To come home every evening to the companion you preferred and who preferred you—that would be all right. (Only there might be babies, and that would be all wrong, because they would want bathing or something

just when you were busy with something else.) Or to come home to no one; or (better still) not to come home at all. So many habits of life were enjoyable, but not that of perpetual unsuitable companionship.

Thus Imogen reflected and philosophised on this great topic of marriage and of love, which did not, however, really interest her so much as most other topics, for she regarded it as a little primitive, a little elementary, lacking in the more entertaining complexities of thought. Metaphysics, poetry, psychology and geography made to her a stronger intellectual appeal; the non-emotional functionings of the dwellers on this planet she found more amusing, and the face of the planet itself more beautiful.

Nevertheless, to be a little in love is fun, and makes enchantment of the days. A little in love, a little taste of that hot, blinding cup—but only enough to stimulate, not to blind. One is so often a little in love. . . .

13

BILLY

Billy left Oxford with his pass. His Liberal cousin accepted him, having it on the authority of Stanley, whom he greatly regarded, that Billy had the makings of a good secretary. Billy denied this, and said he would prefer to be a veterinary surgeon, or else to farm in a colony. But his mother had decided that he was to be political. Political. He thought he saw himself . . . And anyhow, where was the sense of politics? A jolly old mess the politicians made of things, and always had. . . . Somehow politics didn't

seem a real thing, like vetting or farming. There was so much poppycock mixed up with it. . . .

But there it was. His mother must have her way. He supposed it would be a shame to disappoint her. Molly wouldn't look at politics, and one of them must. So in October he was to begin looking at them. One thing was, Giles Humphries wouldn't keep him long; he'd soon see through him. . . .

"Doesn't make much odds, anyhow," he reflected gloomily. "One damn silly job or another. Mother'll never let me do what I want. 'Tisn't good enough for her. I wish people wouldn't *want* things for one; wish they'd let one alone. Being let alone . . . that's the thing."

Rome said to Stanley, "You'll never make a politician of that boy. Why try?"

"He's too young to say that about yet, Rome. I *should* like to see him doing some work for his country. . . ."

"They don't do that, my dear. You've been misinformed. I thought you went to the House sometimes. . . . Really, Stan, I can't imagine why you should try and turn Billy, who'd be some use in the world as an animals' doctor, or a tiller of the soil, or, I daresay, as a number of other things, into anything so futile and so useless and so singularly unsuited both to his talents and to his honest nature as a politician. I suppose you'll make him stand for Parliament eventually. Well, he'll quite likely get in. People will elect anyone. But he'd only be bored and stupid and wretched there. He's got no gift of the gab, for one thing. You let the child do what he wants."

"I'm not forcing him. He knows he is free."

"He knows nothing of the sort. He knows you've

set your heart on this, and he doesn't want to vex you. Really, you mothers . . ."

So Billy, in the autumn of 1913, became the inefficient secretary of his kind, inefficient Liberal cousin, who was, however, no more inefficient than his fellow members of Parliament.

14

EXIT PAPA

Those were inefficient years; silly years, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. They were not much sillier than usual, but there was rather more sound and fury than had been customary of late. It was made by militant suffragists, who smashed public property and burned private houses with an ever more ardent abandon; by Welsh churchmen who marched through London declaring that on no account would they have their church either disestablished or disendowed; by dock and transport strikers, who had a great outbreak of indomitability and determination in 1911, and another in 1912; by Mr. Lloyd George's Insurance Act, which caused much gnashing of teeth, foaming of mouths and flashing of eyes; by Liberals and Conservatives, who, for some reason, suddenly for a time abandoned that sporting good humour which has always made English political life what it is, a thing some like and others scorn, and took on to dislike each other, even leaving dinner parties to which members of the opposition party had been carelessly invited; and by the men of Ulster, who, being convinced in their consciences that Home Rule would be disastrous to the material well-being of Ulster, covenanted to defeat the present con-

spiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland, and, to this end, got a quite good conspiracy going themselves. There was also, it need hardly be said, plenty of sound and fury on the continent, particularly in the Balkans.

They make, these years, a noisy, silly, rowdy, but on the whole cheery chapter of the idiot's tale. Howbeit, they were less noisy and less silly, and far more cheery, than the chapter which was to follow.

Just before this chapter began, papa died. Afterwards they said, it is a mercy papa is dead; that he died before the smash that would so have shattered him. Papa, gentle and sensitive and eighty-four, could scarcely have endured the great war. Down what fresh avenues of faith it would have sent his still adventurous soul exploring, seeking strength and refuge from the nightmare, would never be known. He died in May, 1914. He died as he had lived, a great and wide believer, still murmuring, "I believe . . . I believe . . . I believe . . ."—a credulous, faithful, comprehensive, happy Georgian. He had moments when agnosticism or scepticism was the dominant creed in his soul, but they were only moments; soon the tide of his many faiths would surge over him again, and in all these he died.

"Dear papa," said Vicky, weeping. "To think that he is with mamma at last! And to think that now he *knows* what is true. . . . Oh, dear, how will he ever get on without all those speculations and new beliefs? One knows, of course, that he is happy, darling papa . . . but will he find it at all the *same*?"

Rome said, "Why? Taking your hypothesis, that there is another life, why should it be supposed to be a revelation of the truth about the universe, or about

God? Why should not papa go on speculating and guessing at truth, trying new faiths? You people who believe in what you call heaven seem to have no justification for making it out such an informed place."

"Oh, my dear; aren't we told that all shadows shall flee away, and that we shall *know*? I'm sure we are, somewhere, only you won't read the Bible ever."

"On the contrary, I read the Bible a good deal. I find it enormously interesting. But the one thing we can be quite sure about all those who wrote it is that they had no information at all as to what would occur to them after their deaths. That is among the very large quantity of information that no one alive has ever yet had. So, if you think of papa in heaven, why not think of him in the state in which he would certainly be happiest and most himself—still exploring for truth? Why should death bring a sudden knowledge of all the secrets of the universe? You believers make so many and such large and such unwarrantable assumptions."

"My dear, we must make assumptions, or how get through life at all?"

"Very true. How indeed? One must make a million unwarrantable assumptions, such as that the sun will rise to-morrow, and that the attraction of the earth for our feet will for a time persist, and that if we do certain things to our bodies they will cease to function, and that if we get into a train it will probably carry us along, and so forth. One must assume these things just enough to take action on them, or, as you say, we couldn't get through life at all. But those are hypothetical, pragmatistical assumptions, for the purposes of action; there is no call actually to believe them, intellectually. And still less call to increase their number,

and carry assumptions into spheres where it doesn't help us to action at all. For my part, I assume practically a great deal, intellectually nothing."

Vicky was going through her engagement book, seeing what she would have to cancel because of papa's death, and all she answered was, absently, "Dear papa!"

SECOND PERIOD: SMASH

I

SOUND AND FURY

THE so bitter, so recent, so familiar, so agonising tale of the four years and a quarter between August, 1914, and November, 1918, has been told and re-told too often, and will not be told in detail here. It is enough, if not too much, to say that there was a great and dreadful war in Europe, and that nightmare and chaos and the abomination of desolation held sway for four horrid years. All there was of civilisation—whatever we mean by that unsatisfactory, undefined, relative word—suffered irretrievable damage. All there was of greed, of cruelty, of barbarism, of folly, incompetence, meanness, valour, heroism, selfishness, littleness, self-sacrifice and hate, rose to the call in each belligerent country and showed itself for what it was. Men and women acted blindly, according to their kind; they used the torments of others as stepping stones to prosperity or fame; they endured torments themselves, with complaining, with courage, or with both; they did work they held to be useful, and got out of it what credit and profit they could; or work they knew was folly, and still got out of it what they could. They went to the war, they stayed at home, they scrambled for jobs among the chaos, they got rich, they got poor, they died, were maimed, medalled, frost-bitten, tortured, bored, imprisoned, embittered, enthusiastic, cheerful, hopeless, patient, or matter-of-fact, according to circumstances and temperament. Many

people said a great deal, others very little. Some parents boasted, "I have given my all," others said, "Well, I suppose they've got to go into the damned thing," some men said, "I must go into it; it's right," some, "I shall go into it: it's an adventure," some "I must go into it like other people, though it's all wrong," some, "It may be all right for others, but I shan't go into it," some, "I shan't go until I'm forced," some, "I shan't go even then." There were, in fact, all manner of different attitudes and ways of procedure with regard to the war. To some it was a necessary or unnecessary hell, to some a painful and tedious affair enough, but with interests and alleviations and a good goal in sight; to some an adventure; to some (at home) a satisfactory sphere for work they enjoyed, to some a holy war, to others a devil's dance in which they would take no part, or which they wearily did what they could to alleviate, or in which they joined with cynical and conscious resolve not to be left out of whatever profits might accrue.

But to the majority in each country it was merely a catastrophe, like an earthquake, to be gone through blindly, until better might be.

2

THE FAMILY AT WAR

Of the Garden family, Vicky was horrified but enthusiastically pro-war. Her two sons got commissions early, and she helped the war by organising bazaars and by doing whatever it was that one did (in the early stages, for in the later more of violence had to be done) to Belgian refugees. Maurice and his paper

were violently pacifist, and became a by-word. Rome saw the war and what had led up to it as the very crown and sum of human folly, and helped, very capably and neatly, to pack up and send off food and clothes to British prisoners. Stanley was caught in the tide of war fervour. She worked in a canteen, and served on committees for all kinds of good objects, and behaved with great competence and energy, her heart wrung day and night with fear for Billy. In 1917 she caught peace fever, joined the peace party and the Women's International League, signed petitions and manifestos in support of Lord Lansdowne, and spoke on platforms about it, which Billy thought tiresome of her.

Irving lent a car to an ambulance, and his services to the Ministry of Munitions, and became a special constable. Una sent cakes to her sons and farm-hands at the front, and employed landgirls on the farm. She took the war as all in the day's work; there had been wars before in history, and there would be wars again. It was awfully sad, all the poor boys being taken like that; but it sent up the price of corn and milk, and that pleased Ted, for all his anxiety for his sons.

The younger generation acted and reacted much as might be expected of them. Vicky's Hugh, who joined the gunners, was interested in the business and came tolerably well through it, only sustaining a lame leg. Tony, the younger, was killed in 1916. Maurice's Roger, whose class was B2, served in France for a year, and wrote a good deal of trench poetry. He was then invalided out, and entered the Ministry of Information, where he continued, in the intervals of compiling propaganda intended to interest the natives of Iceland in the cause of the Allies, to publish trench

poetry, full of smells, shells, corpses, mud and blood.

"I simply can't read the poetry you write in these days, Roger," his mother, Amy, complained. "It's become too terribly beastly and nasty and corpse. I can't think what you want to write it for, I'm sure."

"Unfortunately, mother," Roger explained, kindly, "war *is* rather beastly and nasty, you know. And a bit corpse, too."

"My dear boy, I know that; I'm not an idiot. Don't, for goodness' sake, talk to me in that superior way, it reminds me of your father. All I say is, why *write* about the corpses? There've always been plenty of them, people who've died in their beds of diseases. You never used to write about *them*."

"I suppose one's object is to destroy the false glamour of war. There's no glamour about disease."

"Glamour, indeed! There you go again with that terrible nonsense. I don't meet any of these people you talk about who think there's glamour in war. I'm sure *I* never saw any glamour in it, with all you boys in the trenches and all of us at home slaving ourselves to death and starving on a slice of bread and margarine a day. Glamour, indeed! I'll tell you what it is, a set of you young men have invented that glamour theory, just so as to have an excuse for what you call destroying it, with your nasty talk. Like you've invented those awful Old Men you go on about, who like the war. I'm sick of your Old Men and your corpses."

"I'm sick of them myself," said Roger, gloomily, and changed the subject, for you could not argue with Amy. But he went on writing war poetry, and gained a good deal of reputation as one of our soldier poets. On the whole he was more successful as a poet than

as a propagandist to Iceland, which cool island remained a little detached about the war.

Stanley's Billy hailed the outbreak of hostilities with some pleasure, and was among the first civilians to enlist. Here, he felt, was a job more in his line than being secretary to his Liberal cousin, which he had found more and more tedious as time passed. He fought in France, in Flanders, in Gallipoli, and in Mesopotamia, was wounded three times, and recovered each time to fight again. He was a cheerful, ordinary, unemotional young soldier, a good deal bored, after a bit, with the war. On one of his leaves, in 1916, he married a young lady from the Vaudeville Theatre, whom Stanley could not care about.

"I know mother wanted me to marry a highbrow girl," he confided to Molly. "Some girl who's been to college or something. But I haven't much to say to that sort ever, nor they to me. Now Dot . . ."

But even Molly had her misgivings about Dot. She was not sure that Dot would prove quite monogamous enough. And, as it turned out, Dot did not prove monogamous at all, but rather the contrary.

Molly herself had become an ambulance driver in France. She frankly enjoyed the war. She became engaged to officers, successively and simultaneously. She acted at canteen entertainments and gained a charming reputation as a comedienne. At the end of the war she received the O. B. E. for her distinguished services.

Her mother knew about some of the engagements, and thought them too many, but did not know that Molly had for a time been more than engaged. She never would know that, for Molly kept her own counsel. Molly knew that to Stanley, with her ideal-

istic view of life and her profound belief in the enduring seriousness of personal relations, it would have seemed incredibly trivial, light and loose to be a lover and pass on, to commit oneself so deeply and yet not count it deep at all, but emerge free and untrammelled for the next adventure. It had seemed incredible to Stanley in her husband; it would seem more incredible in her daughter.

"Mother's so different," thought Molly. "She'd never understand. . . . Aunt Rome's different too, but she'd understand about me; she always understands things, even if she despises them. She *would* despise this, but she wouldn't be surprised. . . . Mother would be hurt to death. She must never, never guess."

As to Vicky's daughters, Phyllis was useful in some competent, part-time, married way that may be imagined. Nancy turned violently anti-war and became engaged to a Hungarian artist, who was subsequently removed from his studio in Chelsea and interned. Imogen was everything by turns and nothing long. The war very greatly discomposed her. It seemed to her a very shocking outrage both that there should be a war, and that, since there was a war, she should be found, owing to a mere fluke of sex, among the non-combatants. The affair was a horrid nightmare, which she had to stand and watch. People of her age simply *weren't* non-combatants; that was how she felt about it. Strong, active people in the twenties; it seemed a disgrace to her, who had never before so completely realised that she was not, in point of fact, a young man. War was ghastly and beastly; but if it was there, people like her ought to be in it. However, since this was obviously impossible, she sulkily and simultaneously joined a pacifist league and became a V. A. D.,

in the hope of getting sent out to France. She was an infinitely incapable V. A. D., did everything with remarkable incompetence, and fainted or was sick when her senses and nerves were more displeased than usual by what they encountered, which was often. She was soon told that she had no gifts for nursing and had better stick to cleaning the wards. This she did, with relief, for some time, until her friends said, why not get a job in a government office, which was much more lucrative and amusing. Sick of hospitals, she did so. She was under no delusions as to the usefulness of any work she was likely to do in an office; but still, one had to do something. She could not write; her jarred, unhappy nerves sought and found a certain degree of oblivion in the routine, the camaraderie, the demoralising absurdity, of office work, which was like being at school again. Also, it was paid, and, as she could not write, she must earn money somehow.

So, indolent, greedy, unbalanced, trivial and demoralised, Imogen, like many others, drifted through the great war. Two deaths occurred to her—the death of her brother and companion Tony, which blackened life and made the war seem to her more than ever a hell of futile devilry; and the death of Neville, a young naval officer, to whom she had become engaged in 1915, and who was killed in 1916. It was a queer affair, born of the emotionalism and sensation-seeking that beset many people at that time. She had not known him long; she did not know him well. She was aware that it was ignominious of her to encourage him, merely on the general love she bore to the navy, a little flattered excitement, and a desire, new-born, to experience the sensation of engagement. They had few thoughts in common, but they could joke together, and talk of

ships, and of how they loved one another, and about him was the glamour of the navy, and she felt, when he kissed her, that stimulation of the emotions and senses that passes for love. When they talked about things in general, and not about their love, she heard within her that cold voice that never lied, saying, "You cannot live with this nice young naval man. You will tire each other." Worse, they sometimes shocked one another. Could it be—disastrous thought—that she had outgrown the navy?

"You're a rum kid, darling," he said to her. "You and I disagree about nearly everything, it seems to me. We shall have a lively married life. . . . But I don't care. . . ."

But he did care a little, all the same. Imogen sometimes suspected that, like herself, he had begun to think they had made a mistake. But then he would take her in his arms, and when they embraced neither of them felt that they had made a mistake.

However, one is not embracing all the time, and Imogen slowly came to the point, between one leave and another, of deciding to end the affair. The navy and she had grown away from each other; there was no doubt about that.

But before they could discuss this point, Neville was killed at Jutland.

Imogen wept for him, and believed for a time that she loved him profoundly and missed him horribly. But the small cold voice within her that never lied whispered, "You are only sorry that he is dead for his sake, because he loved being alive and ought to be alive. You sometimes miss his kisses and his love, but you are glad that you are free."

She spent an unhappy week-end with his parents in

the country. They did not very greatly care for her—cared only for Neville's sake. Neville's father was a rector, very simple and village, his mother a rector's wife, very parochial and busy. With them Imogen felt leggy and abrupt, and the wrong kind of a girl. She couldn't be articulate with them, or show them how bitterly she felt Neville's death before he had properly lived. They were unhappy but not bitter; they said, "It was God's will," and she could not tell them that, in her view, they spoke inaccurately and blasphemed. Yet their hearts were (to use the foolish phrase) broken, and hers by no means. She caught Neville's mother looking at her speculatively from behind her glasses, and wondered if she were wondering how much this gauche young woman had loved her boy. She wanted to beg her pardon and dash for the next train. They could not want her with them; to have her was a duty they thought they owed to Neville. "I've no right here," she cried to herself. "They loved him. I was only in love with his love for me. Their lives are spoilt, mine isn't."

She did not visit them again. That was over. Neville took his place in her memory not as a personal loss but as a gay, heartbreaking figure, a tragic symbol of murdered, outraged youth.

But when Tony was killed, the world's foundations shook. He was her darling brother, her beloved companion in adventure, scrapes and enterprises from their childhood up. She could by no means recover from the cruel death of Tony, which shattered the life of his home.

But daily work in an office, so cheerful, so fruitless, so absurd, was an anodyne. Offices were full of people who did not mind the war, who, some of them, rather

enjoyed the war. There are no places more cynical than the offices of governments. Not parliaments in session, not statesmen in council, not cardinals in conclave, not even journalists emitting their folly in the dead of the night. Encased in an armour of this easy cynicism against the savage darts of the most horrid war, Imogen and many others drifted through its last years to the war's cynical culmination, the horrid but welcome peace.

THIRD PERIOD: DÉBRIS

I

PEACE

A HORRID peace it was and is. It is the fashion to say so, and, unlike most fashionable sayings, it is true. But at first the fact that it *was* peace, that people were not killing each other (in such large numbers and for such small reasons) any more, was enough and made everyone happy. A poor peace enough; but the fact remains that the worst peace is heaven compared with the best war. It was like the first return of chocolate éclairs. "They're rather funny ones," people said, "not quite like the old kind; but still, they *are* éclairs." So peace. It was indeed a rather funny one, not quite like the old kind; but still, it was peace. And what, if you come to that, was the old kind, that any other should be compared unfavourably with it? The trouble is, perhaps, rather that this new variety *is* like it.

The Peace Treaty has been called all kinds of names—patchwork, violent, militarist, manufactured, makeshift, frail, silly, uneconomic, unstatesmanlike; and all the names except the last may be true. (Unstatesmanlike the treaty was certainly not; very few treaties drawn up by statesmen unfortunately are that; and, in passing, this word unstatesmanlike seems often to be curiously and thoughtlessly used, in a sense directly contrary to that which it should bear.) Well, even if nearly all these opprobrious names were true, it seems a pity to be always discontented. Wiser were those who encouraged the infant, patted it on the back, and

greeted the unseen with a cheer. Like beer, like shoe-leather, it seemed costly and poor. But who are we, that we can afford to be particular? We should make the best of whatever peace is given us, even if it is not the brand we should have preferred. "We've got," said the resigned citizen, "to put up with these poor, nasty-looking things, that last no time at all. Beer it's not, and shoeleather it's not, and peace it won't be, properly speaking. A kind of substitute they all are, like margarine. But what I say is, we're lucky to get them." So we were.

Idealists, such as Stanley Croft, though they did not admire the Treaty of Versailles, saw it as the material out of which the living temple of peace might yet be built, on that great cornerstone, the League of Nations. The League of Nations was to the peace-wishers as his creed is to the Christian; it bound them to believe in a number of difficult, happy, unlikely and highly incompatible things, such as lasting peace, the freedom of small nations, arbitration between large ones, and so forth. They joined the League of Nations Union, full of hope and faith. Stanley did so, at its inception, and became, in fact, a speaker on platforms in the cause.

2

THE LAST HOPE

Stanley, in her late fifties, looked and spoke well on platforms; she looked both nice and important. Her blue eyes, under their thick, level brows, were as starry as ever, her voice as deep and full and good, her mind young and alert. A clever, high-minded, balanced, vigorous, educated matron of close on sixty; that was

what Stanley was. She was the kind of matron to whom younger women gave their confidence. Her son and daughter did not give her their whole confidence, but that was not her fault.

Billy was demobilised. A seamed scar cut across his cheek, and his eyes were queer and sulky and brooding. He disliked by now his wife, Dot. She reciprocated the feeling, and very soon left him for another, so he divorced her. Stanley could not help being glad, Dot had been such a mistake. She was not the kind of wife to help her husband in his parliamentary career. She was the more the kind who succeeds him in it, but even that Stanley could not know in 1919, and she regarded Dot as, from every point of view, a wash-out.

"Look here, mother," Billy said to her, with nervous, sulky decision. "I can't go back to that secretary job. Nor any other job of that kind. Sitting jobs and writing jobs bore me stiff. I've done too much sitting, in those beastly trenches. And politics anyhow seem to me plain rot. I want to train for a vet. I'm awfully sorry if you're sick about it, but there it is. Why don't you make Molly take on a secretary-to-a-Liberal job? She couldn't be worse than I was, anyhow."

"A vet, Billy! Darling boy, why a vet? Why not a human doctor, if you must be something of that sort?"

"Want to be a vet," said Billy, and was.

As to Molly, she became secretary to no Liberal, for she married, in 1919, a flight commander, and his politics, if any, were Coalition-Unionist.

So much for Stanley's hopes for political careers for her children. She sighed, and accepted the inevitable, and put her hope more than ever in the League

of Nations. If that could not save the world, nothing could. . . .

Certainly nothing could, said Rome. Nothing ever had yet. At least, what did people mean, precisely, by save? Words, words, words. They signified, as commonly and lightly used, so very little.

3

THE CHARABANC

The post-war period swung and jolted along, like a crazy, broken-down charabanc full of persons of varying degrees of mental weakness, all out on an asylum treat. Every now and then the charabanc stopped for a picnic, or conference, at some nice continental or English watering-place, and these were very cosy, chatty, happy, expensive little times, enjoyed by all, and really not doing very much more harm to Europe than any other form of treat would have done, since they had, as a rule (the amusing reconstruction of the map of Europe once effected), practically no effects of any kind, beyond, of course, strengthening the already perfect harmony prevalent among the victorious allied nations.

Reparations was the great topic at these chats; but it was and is such a very difficult topic that no one there (no one there being very clever), made much of it, and it has not really been decided about even now.

International politics were, in fact, in the years following the great war, even more greatly confused than is usual. Only one great international principle remained, as ever, admirably lucid—that principle so

simply explained by M. Anatole France's Penguin peasant to the Porpoise philosopher.

"Vous n'aimez pas les Marsouins?"

"Nous les haïssons."

"Pour quelle raison les haïssez-vous?"

"Vous le demandez? Les Marsouins ne sont-ils pas les voisins des Pingouins?"

"Sans doute."

"Eh bien, c'est pour cela que les Pingouins haïssent les Marsouins."

"Est-ce une raison?"

"Certainement. Qui dit voisins dit ennemis. . . . Vous ne savez donc pas ce que c'est que le patriotisme?"

There was no confusion here.

Home politics, in each country, seemed to lack even this dominant *motif*, and confusion reigned unrelieved. In Great Britain a Coalition government was in power. The usual view about this government is that it was worse and more incompetent than other governments; but it seems bold to go as far as this. "The nation wants a return to a frank party government," non-coalition Liberals and Conservatives began saying, and said without intermission until they got it, in 1922. They sometimes explained why they preferred a frank party government, but none of their reasons seemed very good reasons; the real reason was that they, very properly and naturally, wished their own party to be in power. The Die-Hards and the Wee Frees came to be regarded as valiant, incorruptible little bands, daring to stand alone; Co-Liberals and Co-Unionists were understood, somehow, to have compromised with Satan for reward. There is a good deal of unkindness in political life.

SETTLING DOWN

Meanwhile, the people settled down, were demobilised from the army, and from the various valuable services which they had been rendering to their country, and began to fall back into the old grooves, began to recover, at least partially, from the war. But the war had left its heritage of poverty, of wealth, of disease, of misery, of discontent, of feverish unrest.

"Now to write again," said Imogen, and did so, but found it difficult, for the nervous strain of the years past, and the silliness of the avocations she had pursued through them, had paralysed initiative, and given her, in common with many others, an inclination to sally forth after breakfast and catch a train or a bus, seeking such employment as might be created for her, instead of creating her own. The helpless industry of the slave had become hers, and to regain that of the independent and self-propelled worker was a slow business.

Further, she was absorbed, shaken and disturbed by a confusing and mystifying love into which she had fallen, blind and unaware, even before peace had descended. She very greatly loved someone whom she could not, what with one thing, what with another, hope to marry. All values were to her subverted; she fumbled blindly at a world grown strange, a world as to whose meaning and whose laws she groped in the dark, and emotion drowned her like a flood.

There revived in force about this time the curious old legend about the young. The post-war young, they were now called, and once more people began to believe and to say that one young person closely resembles

other young persons, and many more things about them.

"The war," they said, "has caused a hiatus, and thought has broken with tradition. Thus youth is no longer willing to accept forms and formulæ only on account of their age. It has set out on a voyage of enquiry, and, finding some things which are doubtful and others which are insufficient, is searching for forms of expression more in harmony with the realities of life and knowledge."

Many novels were written about the New Young, half in reprobation, half in applause; famous literary men praised them in speeches; they were much spoken of in newspapers. All the things were said of them that have been said of the young at all times, only now their newness, their special quality, was attributed to the European war, in which they were too young to have actively participated, but which had, it was believed, exercised upon them some mystic and transmuting influence. Once more the legend flourished that the number of years lived constitutes some kind of temperamental bond, so that people of the same age are many minds with but a single thought, bearing one to another a close resemblance. The young were commented on as if they were some new and just discovered species of animal life, with special qualities and habits which repaid investigation. "Will these qualities wear off?" precise-minded and puzzled enquirers asked. "When the present young are thirty and middle-aged, will they still possess them? Do the qualities depend upon their age, or upon the period of the world's history in which they happen to be that age?" But no precise or satisfactory reply was ever given. It never is. Enquirers into the exact

meaning of popular theories and phrases are of all persons the least and the worst answered. You may, for instance, enquire of a popular preacher, or anyone else, who denounces his countrymen as "pagan" (as speakers, and even Bishops, at religious gatherings have been known to do), what exactly he means by this word, and you will find that he means irreligious, and is apparently oblivious of the fact that pagans were and are, in their village simplicity, the most religious persons who have ever flourished, having more gods to the square mile than the Christian or any other Church has ever possessed or desired, and paying these gods more devout and more earnest devotion than you will meet even among Anglo-Catholics in congress. To be pagan may not be very intelligent; it is rustic and superstitious, but it is at least religious. Yet you will hear the word "pagan" flung loosely about for "irreligious," or sometimes as meaning joyous, material and comfort-loving, whereas the simple pagans walked the earth full of what is called holy awe and that mystic faith in unseen powers which is the antithesis of materialism, and gloomy with apprehension of the visitations of their horrid and vindictive gods; and, though no doubt, like all men, they loved comfort, they only obtained, just as we do, as much of that as they could afford. And, whatever Bishops mean by pagan, as applied to modern Englishmen, it is almost certain that they do not mean all this.

Never, perhaps, was thinking, writing and talking looser, vaguer and more sentimental than in the years following the European war. It was as if that disaster had torn great holes in the human intelligence, which it could ill afford. There was much writing both of verse and of prose, much public and private speaking

much looking for employment and not finding it, much chat about the building of new houses, much foolish legislation, much murder and suicide, much amazement on the part of the press. Newspapers are always easily amazed, but since the war weakened even their intelligence there could not be so much as a little extra departure from railway stations on a Bank Holiday (surely most natural, if one thinks it out) without the ingenuous press placarding London with "Amazing scenes." The press was even amazed if a married couple sought divorce, or if it thundered, or was at all warm. "Scenes" they would say, "Scenes"; and the eager reader, searching their columns for these, could find none worthy of the name. One pictures newspaper reporters going about, struck dumb with amazement at every smallest incident in this amazing life we lead, hurrying back to their offices and communicating their emotion to editors, news editors and leader writers, so that the whole staff gapes, round-eyed, at the astonishing world on which they have to comment. An ingenuous race; but they make the mistake of forgetting that many of their readers are so very experienced that they are seldom surprised at anything.

During these years, the sex disability as regards the suffrage being now removed, women stood freely for Parliament, but the electorate, being mostly of the male sex, showed that the only women they desired to have in Parliament were the wives of former members who had ceased to function as such, through death, peerage, or personal habits. Many women, including Stanley Croft, who of course stood herself, found this very disheartening. It seemed that the only chance for a woman who desired a political career was to marry a member and then put him out of action. Such

women as were political in their own persons, who were educated and informed on one or more public topics, had small chance. "We don't want to be ruled by the ladies," the electorate firmly maintained. "It's not their job. Their place is . . ." etc.

The world had not changed much since the reign of Queen Victoria.

And so, with the French firmly and happily settled in the Ruhr, their hearts full of furious fancies, declaring that it would not be French to stamp on a beaten foe, but that their just debts they would have, with Germany rapidly breaking to pieces, drifting towards the rocks of anarchy or monarchy, and working day and night at the industry of printing million-mark notes, with Russia damned, as usual, beyond any conceivable recovery, with Italy suffering from a violent attack of Fascismo, with Austria counted quite out, with a set of horrid, noisy and self-conscious little war-born states in the heart of Europe, all neighbours and all feeling and acting as such, with Turkey making of herself as much of an all-round nuisance as usual, with Great Britain anxiously, perspiringly endeavouring both to arrest the progressive wreckage of Europe and to keep on terms with her late allies, and with Ireland enjoying at last the peace and blessings of Home Rule, Europe entered on her fifth year since the armistice.

5

A NOTE ON MAURICE

In this year Maurice's paper perished, having long ceased to pay its way, and, in fact, like so many papers,

suffering loss on each copy that was bought. This is as natural a state of affairs for papers as living on over-drafts is for private persons, but neither state, unfortunately, can last for ever. The money behind the *Gadfly* at last gave out, and the *Gadfly* ceased to be. Maurice, at the age of sixty-five, was deprived of his job and his salary, and became a free-lance, but no less fiery and stubborn, journalist. There were more things to oppose, in his view, than ever before, and he opposed them at large, in the hospitable pages of many a friendly periodical. His opposition had no effect on the affairs of the world, but, in combination with an adequate supply of alcoholic nourishment and his blessed emancipation from married life, it caused him to remain self-respecting and fit, kept senility at bay, and assisted him to bear up against the repeated shocks of Roger's published works.

6

A NOTE ON IMOGEN

The P. & O. liner hooted its way down Southampton Water. The land, the Solent, the open sea, were veiled in February mist. Imogen, leaning on the rail and straining her eyes shore-ward, could only see it dimly, darkly, looming like a ghost through fog. That was England, and life in England; a mist-bound world wherein one blindly groped. A mist-bound and yet radiant world, holding all one valued, all that gave life meaning, all that one was leaving behind.

For Imogen was going, for a year, to the Pacific Islands. Hugh too was going there, to make maps and plans for the government. Imogen was going with

him, exploring, wandering about at leisure from island to island. The perfect life, she had once believed this to be. And still the thought of coral islands, of palm and yam and bread-fruit trees, with the fruits thereof dropping ripely on emerald grass, with monkeys and gay parakeets screaming in the branches, and great turtles flopping in blue seas, with beachcombers drinking palm-toddy on white beaches, the crystal-clear lagoon in which to swim, and, beyond, the blue island-dotted open sea—even now these things tugged at Imogen's heart-strings and made her feel again at moments the adventurous little girl she had once been, dreaming vagabond dreams.

But more often this bright, still world beyond the mists seemed like the paradise of a hymn, a far, unnatural, brilliant, alien place, which would make one sick for home.

Yet she had chosen to go, and no remonstrances, repentances and waverings had quite undone that choice. In that far, bright, clear, alien place, beyond the drifting mists, perhaps thought too was lucid and unconfused, not the desperate, mist-bound, storm-driven, helpless business it was in London. In London all values and all meanings were fluid, were as windy clouds, drifting and dissolving into strange shapes. Life bore too intense, too passionate an emotional significance; personal relationships were too tangled; clear thought was drowned in desire. One could not see life whole, only a flame, a burning star, at its heart.

Through years and years this could not go on; the entanglement of circumstance, the enmeshing of soul and will, was too close for any unravelling; it could only be cut. Under the knife that cut it—and yet was it cut at all, or only hacked all in vain?—Imogen's soul

seemed to bleed to death, to bleed and swoon quite away.

What had she done, and why? All reasons seemed to reel from sight as they churned for open sea between those mist-blind shores. Parakeets? Bread-fruit? Lagoons and coral reefs? O God, she cared for none of them. She had been mad, mad, mad.

"To leave me for so long . . . you can't mean to do it. . . ."

Above the turning, churning screws the hurt voice spoke, how truly, and stabbed her through once more. Can't mean to do it . . . can't do it . . . can't. . . . Oh, how very true indeed. And yet she must do it and would. It was no use; it would solve nothing, settle nothing; merely for a year she would be sick for home among the alien yams.

But, at the thought of the yams, and the bread-fruit, and the grass and parakeets more green than any imagining, and of the very blue lagoons, a little comfort stole into her heavy heart. A merry beachcomber on a white beach—that was the thing to be, even if nothing could be a really happy arrangement but to be two merry beachcombers together. At the thought of the two merry beachcombers who might have been so very happy, the tears brimmed and blinded Imogen's eyes.

What a mess, what a mess, what a bitter, bemusing muddle, life was! One renounced its best gifts, those things in it which seemed finest, most ennobling, most enriching, holding most of beauty and of good; these things one renounced, and filled the dreadful gap with turtles, with a little palm-toddy, with a few foolish parakeets.

What an irony!

Through the blinding mist, above the rushing sound of foaming waters, the voice cried to her . . . *Imogen, Imogen . . . come back.*

Imogen wept.

Alas for the happy vagabond, fallen into such sad state.

7

FINAL

Rome saw Stanley off to Geneva. Stanley had obtained employment in the Labour department of the League of Nations. She was pleased, and keen, and full of hope. The League would save the world yet. . . .

"It's going to be the most interesting work of my life, so far," said Stanley, leaning out of the train. "To find one's best job at sixty-two—that's rather nice, I think. Life's so full of *hope*, Rome. Oh, I do feel happy about it."

"Good," said Rome, and, "Good-bye, my dear," for the train began to move.

"Good-bye, Romie. . . . Take care of yourself; you're looking tired lately."

"I'm very old, you see," Rome said, after the retreating train, and a passer-by, turning to glance at the slight, erect, grey-haired lady, thought that she did not look very old at all.

But she was very old, for she would soon be sixty-four, and, further, she was very tired, for she had cancer coming on, inherited from mamma. She had not mentioned it to anyone yet, beyond the doctor, who had told her that, unless she had operations, she would

die within a year. Operations nothing, Rome had said; such a bore, and only to prolong the agony; if she had to die, she would die as quickly as might be. She further decided that, before the pain should become acute or the illness overwhelming, she would save trouble to herself and others by an apparently careless overdose of veronal. Meanwhile, she had a few months to live.

The thought that it would only, probably, be a few months, set her considering, as she drove herself home in her car, her practised hands steady on the wheel, life, its scope, its meaning, and its end. Life was well enough, she thought; well enough, and a gay enough business for those who had the means to make it so and the temperament to find it so. Life was no great matter, nor, certainly, was death; but it was well enough. We come and we go; we are born, we live, and we die; this poor ball, thought Rome, serves us for all that; and, on the whole, we make too much complaint of it, expect, one way and another, too much of it. It is, after all, but a turning ball, which has burst, for some reason unknown to science, into a curious, interesting and rather unwholesome form of animal and vegetable life. Indeed, thought Rome, I think it is a rather remarkable ball. But of course it can be but of the slightest importance, from the point of view of the philosopher who considers the very great extent and variety of the universe and the extremely long stretching of the ages. Its inhabitants tend to over-rate its importance in the scheme of things. Human beings surely tend to over-rate their own importance. Funny, hustling, strutting, vain, eager little creatures that we are, so clever and so excited about the business of living, so absorbed and intent about it all, so proud

of our achievements, so tragically deploring our disasters, so prone to talk about the wreckage of civilisation, as if it mattered much, as if civilisations had not been wrecked and wrecked all down human history, and it all came to the same thing in the end. Nevertheless, thought Rome, we are really rather wonderful little spurts of life. The brief pageant, the tiny, squalid story of human life upon this earth, has been lit, among the squalour and the greed, by amazing flashes of intelligence, of valour, of beauty, of sacrifice, of love. A silly story if you will, but a somewhat remarkable one. Told by an idiot, and not a very nice idiot at that, but an idiot with gleams of genius and of fineness. The valiant dust that builds on dust—how valiant, after all, it is. No achievement can matter, and all things done are vanity, and the fight for success and the world's applause is contemptible and absurd, like a game children play, building their sand castles which shall so soon one and all collapse; but the queer, enduring spirit of enterprise which animates the dust we are is not contemptible nor absurd.

Rome mused, running leisurely across Hyde Park, of herself, her parents, and her sisters and brothers, of how variously they had all taken life. Her papa had made of it a great spiritual adventure. Her mamma—what had mamma made of life? She had, anyhow, accepted papa and his spiritual adventure, and accepted all her children and their lives. And yet, always and always, mamma had remained delicately apart, detached, too gentle to be called cynical, too practical to be called a philosopher, too shrewd to be deceived by life. Dear mamma. Rome very often missed her still. As to Vicky, she had skimmed gracefully over life's surface like a swallow, dipping her pretty wings

in the shallows and splashing them about, or like a bee, sipping and tasting each flower. She had plunged frequently, ardently and yet lightly into life. Maurice had not plunged into life; he had fought it, opposed it, treated it as an enemy in a battle; he had made no terms with it. Stanley had, on the other hand, embraced it like a lover, or like a succession of lovers, to each of which she gave the best of her heart and soul and mind before she passed on to the next. Stanley believed in life, that it was or could be splendid and divine. Irving and Una both accepted it calmly, cheerfully, without speculation, as a good enough thing, Irving with more of enterprise and more of progressive desire, Una placidly, statically, eating the meal set before her and wishing nothing more, nothing less. Both these accepted.

And Rome herself had rejected. Without opposition and without heat, she had refused to be made an active participant in the business, but had watched it from her seat in the stalls as a curious and entertaining show. That was, and must always, in any circumstances, have been her way. Had she married, or had she gone away, long ago, with Mr. Jayne, would she then have been forced into some closer, some more intimate spiritual relationship with the show? Possibly. Or possibly not. Life is infinitely compelling, but the spirit remains infinitely itself.

Anyhow, it mattered not at all. Life, whatever it had, whatever it might have meant to her, was in its last brief lap.

*"And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. . . ."*

Her little drift of dust was so soon to return and subside whence it came, dust to dust.

She thought that she would miss the queer, absurd show, which would go on with its antics without her, down who knew what æons? Perhaps not very many after all; perhaps all life was before long dustily to subside, leaving the ball, like a great revolving tomb, to spin its way through space. Or perhaps the ball itself would dash suddenly from its routine spinning, would fly, would rush like a moth for a lamp, to some great bright sun and there burst into flame, till its last drift of ashes should be consumed and no more seen.

A drift of dust, a drift of storming dust. It settles, and the little stir it has made is over and forgotten. The winds will storm on among the bright and barren stars.

Rome smiled, as she neatly swung out at the Grosvenor Gate.

THE END

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